

A History of Kannada Literature



L. S. SESHAGIRI RAO



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Seshagiri Rao, L.S.
History of Kannada
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A HISTORY OF KANNADA LITERATURE

L. S. SESHAGIRI RAO



VISWA KANNADA SAMMELAN
14/3, Nrupathunga Road
BANGALORE-560 002

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R. GUNDU RAO
Chief Minister



VIDHANA SOUDHA
BANGALORE
DATE: 18-12-1982

THE RESOLVE AND THE REALISATION

Karnataka's historical heritage is more than two thousand years old. During this period, the history of this land has been glorified by the profuse and rich growth of its language, literature, art and culture.

The essential spirit of a land is hidden in its strong enough, and that the cultural heritage rises to prosperity and that great heights are achieved, endless efforts should be carried on.

Tough interwoven with the Indian culture, Kannada has got its own inherent qualities as well as culture.

In order to depict the glorious heritage of Karnataka, against current developments and in order to proclaim it to the world at large, the first World Kannada Sammelan is being organised at Mysore, which is one of the dominant cultural centres of Karnataka. This, I believe, is a historical event. In order that this Sammelan becomes a grand success,

and that its sweet memory will remain with us for a long time, many schemes have been taken up. One of these has been to bring out cheap editions of the celebrated works of great writers in Karnataka. Under this scheme, we are publishing one hundred and two works and seventeen anthologies. In this literary series, apart from poetry, novels, dramas and thought-provoking books, anthologies which reveal the spirit and variety in Kannada have also been included. At the same time, to introduce the fragrance of Kannada writing to non-Kannada people, we have been publishing the English translations of some selected works as well. We feel that our efforts will not go in vain, if sympathetic readers would read and enjoy these works. At the same time, we will have the feeling that the purpose of holding this Sammelan would have been fulfilled.

The expert members of the literary committee have taken great pains in selecting these works. Luckily, there has been no dearth of great works in Kannada. In this background, the difficulty of choosing only a definite number of works can be well understood. Even then, I believe, the literary committee has done this task in a manner appreciated by all. It is my duty to thank this committee. The writers who have permitted publication of their works under this scheme, have brought credit to themselves. I have to remember with gratitude the liberal help they have rendered on this occasion.

(v)

If this series of books will find good response in the heart of Kannadigas our resolve will have been realised. I can proudly say that this effort is without a precedent. I humbly pray to Mother Bhuvaneshwari that She brings all good to us, by blessing us in this particular endeavour.

ಶ್ರೀ . ಗುರುಬ್ರಹ್ಮ

Chief Minister.

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P R E F A C E

Six years ago I had the privilege of writing 'An Introduction to Modern Kannada Literature' for the Kannada Sahitya Parishat. The present book, however, covers the entire history of Kannada Literature. I am grateful to the Karnataka Government and the Directorate of Kannada and Culture for giving me this opportunity of introducing Kannada Literature to the non-Kannada reader.

The writer of such a history has his Scylla and Charybdis to avoid. On the one hand, the work may turn out to be a series of catalogues of names of authors and works; on the other hand, it may fail to set out the contributions of significant writers. I am aware that the contribution of several writers like S. R. Ekkundi, N. S. Lakshminarayana Bhatta, Siddalinga Pattanasetty, G. S. Siddalingaiah, N. Mogasale, Buddhanna Hingamire, Channanna Valikara, Shankara Mokashi Punekar and N. K. Satyanarayana (to name only a few) needs to be

assessed. Even as it is, I have exceeded the limit originally set. I have endeavoured to acquaint the reader with important trends and movements, and to assess the achievement of each phase or age, keeping in view the larger social context also.

I am indebted to so many sources that it would be impossible to list all of them. I must, however, mention Dr. Mugali's 'History of Kannada Literature', Dr. Srinivasa Havanur's 'Hosagannada Arunodaya' and the volumes of the Histories of Kannada Literature so far brought out by Mysore University and Bangalore University. I have also drawn on my 'Introduction to Modern Kannada Literature'.

My thanks are due to Parishree Printers for their valuable co-operation.

Jyothi, 267, Third Block,
Jayanagar, Bangalore—560 011.

L. S. Seshagiri Rao

These Have Won Laurels

Jnanapilh Award

K V Puttappa (Sri Ramayana Darshana)	1969
Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre (Naaku Tanti)	1974
K Shivarama Karanth (Mukajjiya Kanasugalu)	1978

Bilwara Award

Siddaiah Puranika	1980
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Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya Award

Girish Karnad (Hayavadana)
Chandrashekara Kambara (Jokumaraswamy)

Sahitya Akademi of India Award

K V Puttappa (Sri Ramayana Darshana)	1955
R S Mugali (Kannada Sahitya Charitre)	1956
D R Bendre (Aralu Maralu)	1958
K Shivarama Karanth (Yakshagana)	1959
V K Gokak (Dyava Prithvi)	1960
A R Krishna Sastry (Bankimachandra)	1961
Devudu Narasimha Sastry (Mahakshatriya)	1962
B Puttaswamaiah (Kranthikalyana)	1964
S V Ranganna (Rangabinnapa)	1965

P T Narasimhachar (Hamsa Damayanthi mattu Ithara Rupakagalu)	1966
D V Gundappa (Srimad Bhagavadgeetha Tatparya athava Jeevana Dharmayoga)	1967
Masti Venkatesha Iyengar (Sanna Kathegalu)	1968
H Thipperudraswamy (Karnataka Samskrithi Samikshe)	1969
Sham. Ba. Joshi (Karnataka Samskrithi Purva Pitike)	1970
Adya Rangacharya (Kalidasa)	1971
S S Bhusanuramatha (Sunya Sampadaneya Paramarshe)	1972
V Sitaramaiah (Aralu Baralu)	1973
M Gopalakrishna Adiga (Vardhamana)	1974
S L Bhyrappa (Daatu)	1975
M Shivaram (Manamanthana)	1976
K S Narasimhaswamy (Tereda Bagilu)	1977
B G L Swamy (Hasuru Honnu)	1978
A N Moorthy Rao (Chitragalu-Patragalu)	1979
Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar (Amerikadalli Gorurur)	1980
Channaveera Kanavi (Jeevadhvani)	1981
Chaduranga (Vaishaka)	1982

To

ACHARYA B. M. SRI

A. HISTORY OF KANNADA LITERATURE .

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BOOK I — THE OLD PERIOD

(Up to the Twelfth Century)

CHAPTER I — The Beginnings

(up to 850 A. D.)

Kannada is the language of Karnataka, a southern state of India. It lies between 11.5 and 16.6 North latitudes and 74.2 and 78.4 East longitudes. It has a population of 37, 043, 451.

The state acquired its present shape and area on the first of November 1956, when the map of India was redrawn, and linguistic states were formed. Its borders enclose one-sixteenth of the area of the country.

Kannada is one of the Dravidian languages, next only to Tamil in age. It is difficult to determine when Kannada branched off and became an independent language. The word 'Karnataka' (the Sanskrit form of 'Kannada') is found in the Mahabharata. The Kannada word 'isila' meaning 'fort' is found in the Brahmagiri inscription of Ashoka, going back to the third century B. C. Ptolemy who visited India around

150 A. D. mentions Badami, Pattadkal, Banavasi and other cities of Karnataka. So this much can be said with confidence — that Kannada language goes back to the fourth century B. C.

Edicts and inscriptions found in different parts of Karnataka are of immense value to the student of Kannada Literature. The first extant writing in Kannada with a literary flavour is to be found in the Halmedi Inscription of about 450 A. D. It betrays the strong influence of Sanskrit on written Kannada. It is likely that it had behind it literature of some kind, spanning a century or two. This conjecture is reinforced by the metre and poetic quality of the Tametkal inscription (in Chitradurga District) of the fifth century A. D. There is a striking verbal portrait of one Kappe Arabhatta in the Badami Inscription of about 700 A.D. He is described as gentle to the gentle, a friend to the friendly, but a terror to the troublesome.

Kavirajamarga.

The first extant literary work is '*Kavirajamarga*'. It contains three chapters, each concluding with the words 'Nripathungadevanumathamappa Kavirajamargadol'. The work undoubtedly belongs to the age of Amoghavarsha Nripathunga (814-879), the Rashtrakoota emperor. For a long time it had been considered to be the work of Nripathunga himself, but recent critical opinion leans to the view that it is the work of

Shrivijaya of Nripathunga's court. It is a work on poetics. The kind of discussion on questions of grammar and metre, and the range of illustration which we find here would be possible only with a considerable body of creative writing. The work owes much to Dandini and Bhamaha, but could not have been written unless the author had a rich body of creative writing before him. It also shows a sensitive perception of the relationship between such parts of the mechanics of poetic composition as grammar and metre. Several literary forms like 'gadyakathe', 'bedande' and 'chettana' are mentioned. Native metres like the tripadi, the chowpadi and the akkara seem to have been in extensive use. The author uses expressions like 'purathana kavigal' (poets of yore), 'kavi vrishabhar' (outstanding poets) and 'kavi pradhanar' (important poets), and explicitly refers to prose writers like Vimala, Udaya, Nagarjuna, Jayabandhu and Durvineetha. It is also likely that several verses quoted in this work were taken from a Ramayana in Kannada which has been lost.

'*Kavirajamarga*' is a work of immense importance to students of Sanskrit Literature as to students of Kannada Literature and of language. It has much to say about Sanskrit works like *Kadambari* and *Harshacharita*, and refers to several Sanskrit poets like Gunasuri, Narayana and Magha. It shows Kannada Literature deeply influenced by Sanskrit Literature but

manifesting a spirit of independence. It stresses the importance of freshness and originality. It extols economy of expression, rhythmic pattern and spontaneity. It mentions nine 'rasas', including 'shanthi' (serenity), thus showing the influence of Jaina thought. 'Dhwani' is considered as a figure of speech.

The work is primarily concerned with poetics, but offers glimpses of contemporary social and religious life. It is the work of a poet proud of his country, of his people and of his language and literature, and is characterized by a certain warmth. It describes Karnataka as enclosed by the rivers Kaveri and Godavari. It gives us the picture of a people rich and prosperous, interested in the fine arts, and alive to the importance of earthly prosperity overarched by higher values. One stanza says, "A man must earn money, must acquire knowledge and turn to 'tapas'. What does human life mean without these?"

Kavirajamarga makes one conclusion irresistible—that by 850 A.D. Kannada was not only a well-developed language but also possessed an extensive and rich literature. Pampa whom the Kannadigas revere as the 'Adi Kavi' (the First Poet, the Poets' Poet) (himself refers to 'munina kabbamellam' (all the earlier poetry); from this it is clear that he followed illustrious poets.

CHAPTER II — The Classical Age

(850-1150 A. D.)

The period from 850 to 1150 may be regarded as the Classical Age. It is a period of literary plenitude; as many as twenty-five poets composed some fifty-two works. Also, poets of the stature of Pampa and Ranna flourished in this period, and it gave a work like *Vaddaradhane*. Mainly it is the age of Jaina poets and of champu works.

Vaddaradhane

Vaddaradhane is the first extant prose work which was discovered just a century ago, in 1883. The word 'Vaddaradhane' means 'sadhana' (spiritual endeavour and discipline). *Vaddaradhane* is not the title bestowed by the unknown author of this probably incomplete collection of stories. It is a title accepted by scholars solely for the sake of convenient reference. The work was probably composed around 920 A. D. The author may be Shivakotyacharya.

The work is a collection of nineteen stories, which the author probably took from other sources. All of

them are concerned with evolving souls - with the experience of a soul realizing the transience of earthly pleasures and glory, and awakening to its true nature and destiny. The object of the narratives is to trace the series of births to which the soul is subject, and to bring out the importance of penance. Literature is a handmaid to religion here, but not an entirely inconspicuous handmaid. Not seldom she shines and displays her own loveliness. The author can tell a story. He can make us see a character and convey its feelings - the oscillations and tumult of the mind. Two youths of noble birth have spent their time in dissipation. They are ignorant and illiterate. The king sends for them and asks them what arts they have mastered. "At this they bent their heads and, with tears in their eyes, drew figures on the ground." The stories present a wide range of characters, sometimes even pointing to abnormalities - as in Agnimitra, who marries his own daughter. The awakening to the vanity of earthly pleasures is a generally a realized experience and not a mere patch of preaching. Shivakotyacharya is a gifted storyteller and fortunately exercises his gift often. At times the narration moves through swift-paced dialogues. The author is a master of condensation and compactness. Inevitably there is repetition. Responses to the realization of the hollowness of earthly pomp and pleasure are alike. There is similarity in the cycles of births presented. But in spite of the constricting nature of the subject matter and the demands of the religious

nature of the work (we should also remember that the author of this work was not aiming at literary excellence and was avowedly religious and didactic) it is interesting as a work of literature. The work is written in Old Kannada, with an admixture of older and newer forms. Sanskrit and Prakrit words are used by the author who, however, knows the genius of Kannada Language. Homely expressions are used with happy effect. All in all, *Vaddaradhane* is the work of a man of piety and religion but one interested in human nature and observant of men's ways and manners; he is a born storyteller and the master of a clear and vivid prose style.

Pampa

With Pampa begins the central literary tradition of Kannada Literature. This tradition flows uninterrupted down to the twentieth century. It reconciles life with death. It recognizes the good things of earthly life and responds to the beauty of the earth and the joy of friendship and of love; it recognizes the sweetness of human relations and the demands of moral responsibility. It sees earthly life as the gateway to a larger life. It stresses the fleeting nature of all pleasure and power, and sets the eye on spiritual values. It honours the man who uses power and position to serve others, but reveres the man who can renounce them and seek salvation. Like ancient Greek Literature, it stresses the mutability of power and prosperity, but it does not, as Homer

does, see man as the plaything of the gods. It stresses man's responsibility. It sets not happiness but conquest of the senses and doing one's duty, as the goal of life. Man's actions pursue him through birth after birth and the ultimate release from this cycle is no mere gift of a power outside him. (Some important writers do consider divine grace necessary, but even they stress man's effort). Man has to earn this release through his own efforts, through purity of life and renunciation. This literature is not didactic - always recognizing, as it does, that poetry must provide 'ananda'; but it has a strong moral tone. (Nripathunga himself said, 'The works of the great poets teach us to distinguish between what is sinful and what is righteous, between what is truly beneficial and what is not, between what brings us happiness and what brings sorrow'. Pampa said, 'The utterance of the great Jinendra is Saraswathi, Saraswathi is not something in a woman's form'. Ranna stresses the 'navarasas' in poetry). It defines, therefore, the relationship between the poet and the reader in terms of delight and instruction. Its spirit is one of acceptance of life as an opportunity for wholesome and innocent joy and a moral responsibility.

With Pampa begins the Champu Age. A champu work is a long poem interspersed with prose passages. The greater part of the work is in verse; the poet also employs different metres in the course of a single

work. This form enables the poet to move from verse to prose or from one metre to another as the spirit of his narration demands, and also provides variety in a long narration. As a rule shringara, veera and shanta 'rasa's or sentiments predominate in a champu work. It has to offer descriptions of objects or places or events (like the sea, a city, a prince's wedding, and war) fixed by tradition. A champu work opens with an invocation to the patron deity of the poet - the god his work is dedicated to. This is generally followed by the poet's tributes to his illustrious predecessors sometimes the poet also speaks about himself; he may offer information about his family and himself. This part of the work is invaluable to the historian and the student of the history of literature. The language is Old Kannada, usually with a generous admixture of Sanskrit.

The first champu work was probably the composition of Gunavarma I, of the 9th-10th centuries. But so far as the available works go, Pampa is the first Kannada poet about whose works we can speak with some definite knowledge. Hence the reference to him as the 'Adi Kavi'.

Pampa had a patron famous in history, Arikesari II (925-955). Though one of the vassals of Krishna III of the Rashtrakoota dynasty he was a ruler of considerable strength and importance, and played a role

in deciding the fates of other kings. He gave shelter to Vijayaditya of the Chalukya dynasty when he was in the clutches of Govindaraja of the Rashtrakoota dynasty. Pampa was a commander of Arikesari's army. He is one of the few, the very few, poets who have drawn verbal portraits of themselves. He was a man of middle height, handsome and attractive to women, of slightly dark complexion, curly hair and a round face. He was born in 902. He came from a highly orthodox Brahmin family but his father embraced Jainism. The family may have settled down in Banavasi. In *Vikramarjunavijaya* the poet gives vivid and glowing descriptions of Banavasi - the leveliness of Nature and the intelligence, good taste and maturity of the people, who were equally far-famed for enjoyment of refined pleasures, for their culture and for their sacrifice. Pampa's first chumpu work, *Adipurana*, was completed in 941.

Adipurana is a religious work, while Pampa's other great poem, *Vikramarjunavijaya* is a non-religious work. (Pampa was probably following a tradition in composing one poem devoted to the exposition of the tenets of his religion, and another which did not have a religious association for him.) Jinasena's Sanskrit work, *Purvapurana* was his source for the first work. It sets forth the pilgrimage of the soul of the first Thirthankara, Adinatha. The soul moves through several births towards, and finally attains, emancipation.

It is a spiritual saga set forth by a born poet. Tradition required that, as part of his poem, the poet should narrate the story of an emperor of matchless might and dazzling fame. Pampa narrates the story of Bharatha, the eldest son of Adinatha. Bharatha strides from victory to victory, and his triumphs intoxicate him. Finally he has to accept defeat at the hands of his younger brother, Bahubali. But in the hour of victory Bahubali sees the emptiness of earthly power and renounces everything and takes to tapas. (The world-famous 57-foot statue at Shravanabelagola in Karnataka, popularly known as the statue of Gomateshwara, is that of Bahubali). Thus, all the stories in the work point to the ephemeral nature of earthly pomp and power, and so the work achieves a unity. But yet the narrator responds to all that is sweet and beautiful in human life and relations. Narrating the story of Vajrajhanga (Adinatha in his third birth) and Srimathi, his wife, the poet gives an account of their death in each other's arms as they are choked to death and asks, 'What could be more fortunate than this - dying at the same instant in embrace?'

Adipurana depicts the process of ripening. There is much in this vision of the spiritual progress of the first Thirthankara to delight any lover of poetry. But inevitably there is much that is denominational.

The work which has come to be known as *Pampa Bharatha*, in fact, bears the title *Vikramarjuna-vijaya*. Curiously enough, the hero of the epic is Arjuna and not Dharmaraya. Pampa takes the story from Vyasa; indeed, he speaks with reverence about Vyasa. But he makes his patron Arikesari the hero, identifying him with Arjuna. He was evidently not just flattering his patron. Just as when Shakespeare praised Queen Elizabeth I, he was speaking out of genuine admiration, Pampa praised his patron because he believed that he merited all the praise. But the identification does create problems for the poet, and he does not always extricate himself skilfully. Draupadi is made to marry only Arjuna. But yet Dharmaraya offers her as the stake at the fatal game of dice. Even more intriguing is the fact that Draupadi, harassed by Keechaka, goes for succour, not to Arjuna but to Bheema. And, at the end of the Mahabharata War, Arjuna ascends the throne with Subhadra.

If we are prepared to overlook these minor embarrassments here is a magnificent epic indeed. For, Pampa's work is not by any means an abridged version of Vyasa's great epic. The story, no doubt, is Vyasa's, but it is now imbued with the vision of another great poet. It is the work of a poet with an unfaltering vision of human greatness, distancing his own age through the narration and assessing that age.

It is also the work of a poet alive to human foibles but spontaneously responding to goodness, suffering, nobility and courage. The vision of man's greatness which irradiates his epic is also the vision of his age. It is summed up in one of the stanzas in the poem. "The man who does not uproot the monarchs who press on him,* the man who does not succour the suppliant, the man who does not affix the seal of sacrifice - what is he but a worm?" It is significant that Pampa combines sacrifice with prowess. Mastery over the enemy and mastery over oneself - these go together to earn just praise. In one place Pampa declares, 'If you wish to remember (the characters) think not of any one else, think of Karna'. The poet has identified his patron-king with Arjuna, and Karna is the archfoe of Arjuna - and yet he draws this tribute by his heroism and peerless munificence. Pampa's characters are those we meet in Vyasa's epic. But they are re-created here. In a celebrated stanza Pampa himself lists the great ones of his epic, with the quality that singled out each one of them (curiously omitting Krishna. This is probably because Krishna transcends mere mortal nature.) Pampa's world is one in which man's potential greatness is realized in manifold ways. From Duryodhana's obduracy through Bheema's prowess and

* We should remember that Pampa was himself a commander who had probably fought on the battlefield.

the loftiness of Bheeshma to the righteousness of Dharmaraya, the characters form mirrors to different facets of human greatness. Human nature touches a new summit of splendour in each one of them.

Pampa's style is characterized by economy and majesty. He can present a situation dramatically and concretize an experience. The episode of Nilanjane in *Adipurana* is an instance. Adinatha is born as Purudeva. He is honoured by Devendra himself. Once Devendra selected a dancer of matchless loveliness and grace, Nilanjane, to delight Purudeva. In Devendra's court of dazzling splendour, the dancer whose beauty beggared description danced her way into every heart, flooding all with rapture. But even as the ecstatic spectators watched, her span of life gave out. Devendra realized it, and substituted another Nilanjane. No one marked what had happened—no one except Purudeva. The realization was burnt into him that beauty, grace, power, wealth—all were but fuel to the ever-burning flame of Time. He renounced kingship and retired to the forest.

Pampa can use little incidents with telling effect. After his string of triumphs, Bharatha comes to Vrishabhadri to carve his name there as that of the conqueror of the world. To his astonishment and dismay he finds that the names of the conquerors who had preceded him abound and there is no room

for his name. He has finally to content himself with erasing another name and carving his name in its place. Pampa can take a suggestion in his source and weave it into his narrative with marvellous effect. This is repeatedly manifest in his *Adipurana*.

Pampa has an eye for detail and for total effect. His descriptions of Nature show a man who has been thrilled by her loveliness and endless variety. He does not hesitate to use Sanskrit words, but he also uses native Kannada words with happy effect. He is a learned poet but by no means pedantic. Proverbs and epigrams appear with singular appropriateness. What Dr. Johnson said of Milton may be said of Pampa, that the characteristic of his style is sublimity. Pampa has his lapses. Like Homer, he, too, occasionally nods. His identification of his patron with Arjuna and his fervent admiration of his master betray him into indiscreet praise. But he is a major poet by virtue of his classical restraint, the vividness of his conception of his characters, the classical sense of dignity and proportion which superbly controls his narration, his compact, lofty and stately style and the marriage of an independent vision with the spirit of his Age.

In Pampa, Kannada Literature saw a major poet with a comprehensive vision which he could embody in work which achieved contemporary relevance and

at the same time could place man against the background of many births or the passing generations and fleeting grandeur.

Ponna

Traditionally Ponna is regarded as one of the Three Great Gems (the Rathnathraya) — the other two being Pampa and Ranna. He must have lived in the tenth century; he was in the court of Krishna III (939–996). Like Pampa he seems to have composed one work relating to his religion, *Shanthipurana*, and another of non-religious interest, *Ramakatha* or *Bhuvanaikaramabhyudaya*. The latter has not been found. The former does not justify the high place tradition has accorded it. But judgment on Ponna's achievement has to be suspended till his other poem is discovered.

Ranna

Ranna does not suffer from modesty. He declares that he has broken open the seals of Goddess Saraswathi's treasurehouse. He is proud of the title of 'Kavichakravarthi' (the Emperor of Poets) bestowed on him by his patron. He asks who dare assess his poem. His boast is not altogether unwarranted. Though without the amplitude or the majestic and measured and restrained phraseology of Pampa he can yet carve gigantic characters and wring the heart with a vision of the mighty suffering of mighty men.

Ranna was born in 949. He enjoyed the patronage of Thailapa and his son, Satyashraya, of the Chalukya dynasty. Two of his works are extant — *Ajīṭapurana* and *Gadayuddha* (or *Sahasabheemavijaya*).

Ajīṭapurana (993), like *Adipurana*, narrates the saga of a great soul. The hero of the poem is Ajitha, the second Thirthankara. Ranna found his material in Jinasenacharya's *Uttara Purana*. Ranna's poem does not present the hero, as *Adipurana* does, passing through several births. The story is simpler and is narrated with greater directness and compactness. The work also narrates the story of Emperor Sagara. Ranna strictly follows the Jainagamas and this somewhat constricts his genius. Yet he weaves into his narration lovely pictures and vivid moving scenes. One such scene is that of the lament of the queens when Ajita, their husband, grows weary of sensual pleasures and regal pomp, and goes away. Another scene depicts the shattering grief of the wives of Sagara when they hear the news of the death of their sons. The character of Sagara stands out. His love of his son follows him across and beyond the gulf of death, even in a new birth. Finally he overcomes even this, for him the last of earthly bonds. He has to master the grief of the death, not of one son or two, but of sixty thousand sons. And he does it. He wearies of all things and retires, to spend his days in prayer and meditation.

[2]

Ranna's *Gadayudda* or *Sahasabhecemavijaya* focusses on the celebrated mace-duel between Bheema and Duryodhana in the Mahabharata. But in fact, it surveys the entire story of the mighty epic. Ranna takes the story from Vyasa but is considerably indebted to Pampa. He has also been influenced by Bhasa's *Urubhanga* and Bhattanarayana's *Venisamhara*. Ranna has followed Pampa in identifying his patron with one of the Pandavas and making him the hero of his epic. Vyasabharata does not depict a meeting of Duryodhana's heartbroken parents with him on the battlefield. In Pampa they come to console him after the death of his bosom friend, Karna. Ranna depicts a meeting after the fall of all his chief supporters. Pampa shows Duryodhana plunged in grief on the death of Karna. Ranna shows the anguished emperor lamenting by the body of his dearest companion. As a rule, what Ranna borrows he improves, to suit his purpose.

Ranna is a born dramatist. This explains both his choice of a single episode and his presentation of the episode. He identifies his patron with Bheema and the poem depicts his victory. Yet, evidently the character of Duryodhana fascinates him. Ranna's Duryodhana is the first tragic hero in Kannada Literature - a mighty man who commands admiration in many ways, not without nobility, impelled by some overmastering trait and moving towards disaster; his

suffering and end evoke sympathy and admiration, combined with a sense of great potentialities wasted, and individual nature inexorably working towards an awe-inspiring end. We see Duryodhana, the lustrous ornament of the Kuru dynasty, in the twilight of his life. He is in utter anguish, and is also tormented by bloodthirsty demons on the battlefield. He sees the body of Drona, pierced by a hundred arrows, then that of Abhimanyu, and later that of his own son, Lakshmanakumara. The spectacle breaks his heart, but at the very height of his grief we see him reflective and noble. Gazing on Abhimanyu's body he says, 'My only prayer is that I may display such valour as you did and die as you died, and bows to the dead lad. The sight of the dead bodies of Karna and Dushshasana shatter him and draw from him heartrending tributes. We see Duryodhana as a man of strong loyalties and deep affection. The magnitude of his burdens and the intensity of his grief stir us deeply. But the presence of Sanjaya who harks back to the past and the misdeeds of the monarch now in the grip of paroxysms of sorrow enables us to see things in perspective; the present is the child of the past. Ranna's language has power. 'Veerarasa' dominates the poem, and his language soars with two of the mightiest and most obdurate of heroes of Indian mythology, Bheema and Duryodhana, at the centre of the action. Both in the narrative portions and in the dialogues Ranna's language

is worthy of his subject and the situation. The characters come to life with a few brief strokes. For example, a single stanza carves both Bhicema and Duryodhana. Ashwathama mistakenly slays the Upapandavas and presents one of the heads as that of Bheema. One glance is sufficient; Duryodhana tells him he is mistaken. The explanation he gives is magnificent. This cannot be the head of Bheema. If it were, would it gaze at me unmoved? (Even in death Bheema would at once have glared at him with flaming eyes and gnashing teeth). When, standing on the bank of the Vaishampayana Lake, Bhicema taunts and insults Duryodhana who is hiding in the lake, Ranna says, 'He who had the serpent in his flag perspired even in the water'. The very combination of sounds in the stanza which describes Duryodhana rising in a towering fury from the waters suggests a blood-chilling event. Duryodhana rises like Kalarudra who rives the earth and bursts forth on Doomsday. In Ranna's poem we are in a world of people of mighty passion - Bhicema, Draupadi, Duryodhana, Gandhari, all of them. Contrasted with them is Sanjaya, involved in the fortunes of them all but sympathetic towards Duryodhana, but capable of objectivity and foreseeing the doom in store for him.

Power is the outstanding characteristic of Ranna. His heroes are men of granite, moving mountains. Their very language is like scalding lava issuing from

volcanoes. We have to go to Ranna to see how powerful Kannada can be.

Chavundaraya, Nagavarma I, Nagachandra and Nagasena.

The Age produced some other notable poets like 'Chavundaraya, Nagavarma I and Nagachandra. Chavundaraya was the trusted lieutenant of Rachamalla of the Ganga dynasty. His name is for ever associated with the statue of Bahubali [or Gomateshwara] in Shravanabelagola, which was installed in 981, thanks to the devotion and determination of Chavundaraya. His *Trishashti Lakshana Purana* (also known as *Chavundaraya-purana*) is sacred to Jains. It is a prose work, based on the Sanskrit works of Jinasena and Gunabhadra; it narrates the stories of the lives of sixty-three great men of Jainism. Chavundaraya concentrates on the lives and greatness of these exceptional souls. The outstanding depicts the quality of the narration is conciseness. Nagavarma I rendered into Kannada Bana's famous Sanskrit work, *Kadambari*. Five works are attributed to him - Nagavarma - *Karnataka Kadambari*, *Chandombudi*, *Bhashabhushana*, *Kavyavalokana* and *Vastukosha*. Were all these the works of the same Nagavarma or were there two Nagavarmas? This has been the subject of some speculation. We shall here assume that Nagavarma I is the author of the first two works. *Chandombudi* is the first work in Kannada on prosody. The author has composed stanzas which

both explain and illustrate the features of each metre. His more important work is the Kannada rendering of the challenging *Kadambari*. Like his illustrious predecessors Nagavarma also has suggested an identification of his hero with his patron. Chandrapeeda becomes identified with Chandraraja. Running parallel to the main story is the story of Pundarika and Mahaswethe. The plot becomes bewilderingly involved and there are stretches of description. Nagavarma's Kannada version is a transcreation rather than a translation. While the Sanskrit work is in prose the Kannada work is in champu. Nagavarma has pruned the descriptive passages. He has steered clear of the twin dangers of unreflecting faithfulness and indiscrete meddling. His language is simple and lucid. The story is movingly told, the important scenes vividly realized and the characters clearly drawn. Nagavarma's Kannada version is a model of one kind of translation. Shorn of the ornate prose of the original the matter finds its perfect form in the Kannada work. Another translation of the period merits recognition—Durgasimha's Kannada rendering of the world famous Sanskrit *Panchatantra*. The translation was made in 1031. Durgasimha has taken Vasubhaga Bhatta's Sanskrit work as his original (which is not available now) for his original. So it is to the Kannada *Panchatantra* that we have to go now to get some idea of Vasubhaga Bhatta's work. Durgasimha can narrate a story. He has also a sense of humour.

Nagachandra, who is sometimes referred to as 'Abhinava Pampa' probably lived in the last years of the eleventh century and the twelfth century. He was the author of *Mallinatahapurana* and *Ramachandra-charitapurana*. Both works are mainly concerned with Jainism but the religious fervour does not stifle the poet in Nagachandra. His *Ramchandracharitapurana* is popularly known as 'Pampa Ramayana'. *Mallinathapurana* was probably his first work; he is still serving his apprenticeship here. The story element is thin and the elaborate descriptions serve to emphasize this. But they are vivid and varied. The poet wishes his work to be imbued with 'shanthirasa'. In his later work he narrates the Jaina version of the Ramayana story. He has faithfully followed the Prakrit poet Vimalasuri. The Jaina version of Ramayana is strikingly different from the Valmiki story. Ravana is a very different man here. He is a man of strict virtue. But the loveliness of Seetha overmasters and captivates him. He abducts Seetha but her purity opens his eyes. He decides to capture Rama and surrender Seetha to him. But he dies on the battlefield. Nagachandra has drawn this character with sympathy. In places he is epigrammatic, and has coined epigrams which have passed into the language of everyday life.

Nayascna (c. 1112) is remarkable for his insistence on pure Kannada. This is a phenomenon in Kannada Literature - whenever the Sanskrit element tends to

dominate, the literary language finds its balance through some poet. Nayasena's *Dharmamritha* is a four-canto champu work. Each canto narrates a story. The stories are meant to enshrine the fourteen virtues commended by Jainism. The work is avowedly didactic but interesting; it displays a sense of humour rare in such a work. Like Nagachandra, Nayasena has enriched Kannada with a number of epigrams. He eschewed pedantry and sought to take literature to the people. *Dharmamritha* also opens the windows on contemporary social life. It sets forth social customs traditions and beliefs. It has also a rare flavour of folk literature.

Kanti, believed to be the first poetess in Kannada Literature, is said to have lived in this period. There is a story of a verse contest in which she is supposed to have been rivalled by Pampa. Her contributions are characterized by ingenuity.

The Prose of this Age

A few words may be said about prose in this Age. The inscriptions provide the earliest specimens of Kannada prose. In the period we are studying the prose of the edicts and inscriptions not seldom shows literary flavour. It is at times coloured by emotion and is poetical. An edict in Virajpet Taluk belonging to this period is in Halagannada (Old Kannada) but

the style is simple and racy. There are practically no Sanskrit words in it. The two important prose works of this period, *Vadllaradhane* and *Trishashtilakshana Purana*. display two different styles. The prose of the first work is closer to the native genius of the language and laced with proverbs. It is the prose of one in close touch with the people and writing for the common man. It can dramatize a situation; it can carry a reflection. The prose of Chavundaraya in the 'Purana' is that of a Sanskrit scholar, compact and majestic. Prose also appeared in the champu works. Pampa shows himself as a master of prose, too. He is a scholar familiar with Sanskrit words but there is a happy mixture of Sanskrit and Kannada words. Prose moves racily, along short and simple sentences, in Durgasimha's *Panchatantra*. Nayasena eschews Sanskrit words and his prose is much simpler and lucid; he weaves epigrams and proverbs with skill into his narration.

All in all, prose shows both variety and rich potentialities in this period. It is an Age in which poetry dominates the literary scene but prose is by no means neglected.

The Classical Age : An Assessment

We have now come to the end of an important Age in the history of Kannada Literature – the first in which great poetry was written. Before we proceed

to the study of the next Age, which, incidentally, was an age of Prose, we may sum up the Age of Pampa and Ranna.

Certain limitations leap to the eye. We must remember that perhaps a considerable body of not only folk literature but of the compositions of writers not close to the royal court or to scholars has perished. In complaining that earlier literature did not concern itself with the joys and sorrows of humbler folk, this is something to bear in mind. In fact, this state of affairs continued until printing became a part of the average man's world. As long as making even one copy of a work is laborious and expensive, only the works of those whose writings are related to religion or who are acclaimed by scholars and royal courts have a chance of survival. This is not to say that no other kind of creative activity appeared at all. In fact, it must be the regret of every one who studies the history of any literature that so much of creative composition by simple folk or writers not connected with religious institutions and the aristocracy has perished.

The context in which these poets wrote also imposed certain restrictions. (It must also be conceded that the poets do not always seem to have been unhappy about them.) They lived in an age of many wars and frequent changes in the fortunes of kingdoms

and royal families. This period in Karnataka History has been described as the 'Veera Yuga' or the Heroic Age. It was not only the age of great warrior kings but also the age which looked upon valour as a value in life. In such periods, when people live in the shadow of death, religion tends to assume importance. The period we are now studying was a period in which Jainism was very powerful in Karnataka. It is also interesting to note that in the three centuries from 850 A. D., there were no new powerful religious movements anywhere in India. In Karnataka both Jain kings and non-Jain kings were religious and, while their religious tolerance was remarkable, they certainly encouraged the religious pursuits of the followers of their faiths. Both the important poets of this Age, Pampa and Ranna, and others enjoyed royal patronage. Also, it is evident they were proud both of the patronage they received and their patrons. This leads to embarrassments. Also, in Ranna, the hero does not have the refinement we expect; neither does he, like Homer's brutal hero Achilles, ripen by experience.

Within these limitations, the achievement of the age is truly splendid. Literature gains an independent and honourable place in the life of the community on its own. The spirit of the Age finds expression in poetry, and the poets are able to frame their individual vision in epics which embody the spirit of

the Age. This is no mean achievement. It is not only Pampa's royal heroes who are imbued with the heroic spirit, there are conversations among ordinary soldiers, in no way indispensable to the story, which portray them as eager to display their valour on the battlefield, and willing to accept a soldier's death willingly, if need be. The Age produces poets concerned with form and deliberately making their choices. The Age also shapes a literary tradition which will stretch across nearly a thousand years.

Both Pampa and Ranna lived in the courts of powerful rulers, and life around them was evidently prosperous and peaceful. No wonder they extol the prowess and heroism on which this life was founded. But they probed the nature of heroism further; is this the only kind of heroism - or the highest? It is interesting that, living in a royal court which was the cradle of luxury, they placed a life of wealth and grandeur against the background of fleeting Time and unrelenting Death, and glorified another kind of heroism also. Their works are to be taken together, to understand their total vision of life.

BOOK II — THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

(Upto 1870)

CHAPTER III — The Vachanakaras

The second half of the twelfth century and the thirteenth century witnessed stresses and strains of many kinds in the Deccan plateau. The fortunes of the Chalukyas of Kalyana were on the decline. The Kalachuryas enjoyed a brief glory. Bijjala, of this dynasty, became independent of Thailapa of the Chalukya dynasty. But he had to face strong opposition, and the Chalukyas regained power in 1184. Established theological influences were also on the wane. Buddhism and Jainism were on the decline in Karnataka. Vedic religion seemed to have fallen on evil days; empty show and hollow ritual seem to have plagued it. The advent of Sri Ramanujacharya, the nature of his work, and the response he evoked suggest that the stultifying effects of tradition and ritual had begun to disturb the more serious and thoughtful among the followers of Hinduism. Sri Ramanuja visited Karnataka towards the end of the eleventh century to propogate Srivaishnavism. He converted Hoysala Vishnuvardhana to his faith. After

Ramanuja came Sri Madhwacharya (1238-1317). He preached Dwaitha or Dualism. So the century and a half from 1150 proved to be a period of re-examination of Hindu tenets and practices. It was also a period of political changes and military clashes.

Literature also needed a new inspiration. The champu tradition was on the decline. It had come to be associated with royal courts; most of the poets who chose this form were either court poets or persons holding high positions in the royal court. In the later works of the Champu Age we see the reaction against the excessive use of Sanskrit.

It was at this time that the Veerashaiva Vachanakaras appeared. They did not regard themselves as poets. They were men and women charged with religious fervour and a fierce hatred of sham and superstition; they needed to express themselves, to embody their religious experiences and to awaken the masses. The champu, which had been the vehicle of narration and had become associated with royal courts and with erudition, was of no use to them. They needed a new vehicle; they made one. So was born the Vachana.

Vachana Sahitya is a special growth of the Kannada soil. Vachana is a prose form of indeterminate length, characterized by compactness which we associate with

poetry. (Some authorities extend the Vachana to include the songs composed by the Shivasharanas.) It was during the life-time of Sri Basaveshwara and his contemporaries that Veerashaivism became a dynamic power and swept towards a revolution. The Veerashaiva revolutionaries rebelled against the deadening influence of tradition and ritual. They laid stress on conduct and genuine devotion to God. Never before or since has there been in Karnataka such a blazing forth of bright yet kindly flames, burning down all that was outworn and oppressively constrictive, but also shedding light and radiating warmth. The remarkable thing about Vachana Sahitya is that those who created it did not consciously seek to produce literature. Their object was to give expression to their total surrender to God and their reaction to the world around them. But such was the power of their vision and the intensity of their feelings that, not seldom, they shaped their utterances into literature. These were men and women imbued with unshakable faith in the wisdom, the power and the mercy of the Lord. They cast aside all differences and distinctions based on caste and wealth. They were men and women unawed by authority, fiercely honest and uncompromising in their values, but capable of sympathy and tenderness. Some of them were learned in religious texts: some others were illiterate and without formal education. But one and all, they were close to the people and were impelled by a strong concern for

purity of life and for the recognition of the principle of the equality of all human beings. Some of the Vachanas are marvellous lyrics of devotion, some frank criticism of the prevailing practices. But because these people were close to the people and were more interested in the business of living than in abstract and learned expositions. Their language has clarity and vividness, and is studded with images drawn from a variety of sources but apt and easily understood. For the first time in the history of Karnataka, literature became the dynamo of social change.

Basaveshwara made the vachana a powerful instrument of reflection and feeling. But there is no doubt it was in vogue before him. It probably goes back to Jedara Daasimayya (c. 1140).

Jedara Dasimayya's vachanas are short but brief and pointed, and simple in language. In one vachana he says, addressing his Lord, "Say not that he who has a body is subject to hunger; say not that he who has a body lies. Once at least inhabit a body as I do and know what it is". This is a striking challenge. He compares a hypocritical devotee to a cat in a religious mutt. One of his vachanas runs: "If breasts appear and hair appears on the head the person is described as a woman. If beard and moustache appear, the person is described as a man. But the soul within is neither male nor female".

Basavanna

The greatest of the Vachanakaras is Basavanna (1331-1167). He was born in Bagewadi in Bijapur District. A Brahmin by birth he became a Veerashaiva by choice. He came to Kudalasangama and there received instruction from a great teacher. He then joined the court of King Bijjala and rose to be the Treasurer. The ritual-ridden age was propitious for a religious and social revolution and was waiting for a leader worthy of the mission; it found him in Basavanna. He brushed aside all differences and moved freely with all Veerashaivas. The support of so honoured and powerful a man must have given a new self-respect and confidence to those who came from classes which had long been humble and submissive. The Veerashaiva leaders did not oppose monarchy as such but they were not the men to show excessive zeal in the service of a fellow mortal. When Basavanna himself visited the home of one who had been born in a 'low' caste and then went straight to the palace the king seems to have been incensed. The orthodox people were disturbed by the stir among the down-trodden. Several allegations were made against Basavanna. (In one vachana Basavanna asks: 'Need I be afraid of Bijjala?') Things came to a head when the son of Madhuvaiah, a Harijan, married the daughter of Haralaiah, a Brahmin. Bijjala had the two fathers blinded. He himself was subsequently murdered.

Basavanna and some of his followers moved to Kudalasangama where, in a short while, his earthly sojourn ended.

Basavanna is far more sophisticated than Jedara Dasimayya. His vachanas express a far wider range of emotions. They are the utterances of a man of uncompromising honesty, burning piety and a fierce sense of justice. Some of the vachanas express the torment of a mind devoted to the Lord but dissatisfied with its own state, and the doings of the body it inhabits. "My mind leaps about like the ape on the bough. It doesn't let me pause". "Like a dog in a palanquin my mind is unable to resist temptation. It flows towards enjoyment". "You spread before me the green of sensual pleasure. What can the cow know? The animal takes it for grass". Basavanna addresses Kudalasangama with the intimacy of a child addressing its father. At times, he denounces angrily and scornfully the hypocrites around him as well as empty rituals. "When they see a serpent of stone they say 'pour milk', when they see a live serpent they say, 'Kill it'. "When the Jangama who can eat food comes they ask him to go away; but they offer food to the linga which cannot eat". Some times he is the patient kindly guide, illuminating the path of the seeker of God. "Steal not, kill not, utter not lies, lose not your temper. Loathe not others, praise not yourself nor run down others. This is purity within, this is purity without. This is the way to please our

Master, Kudalasangama", In one vachana he compares his mind to a fig, rotten within. In another he says, "Those who are rich build Shiva temples; what can I build? I am a poor man. My leg is the pillar, my body the temple, my head is the gold tower". Notice how, with finality, wealth is set aside, and how simply but concretely the idea that the body is the temple of the Lord is expressed. This vachana also illustrates the internal evolution, within a short span, in some of Basavanna's vachanas. What he says he says concretely, often through familiar but telling images. "The mind is the serpent, the body the basket which contains it. How can the snakecharmer know when it will strike? The garuda to hold it back is the daily worship of the Lord". "Is the master of the house within or isn't he?" Through such homely images Basavanna communicates his response to life and to the ways of the world around him.

Allama Prabhu

Basaveshwara was the greatest of the Vachanakaras. But there were others whose utterances, though not covering the same range, constitute a remarkable body of literature. There is his contemporary, the stern yet tender-hearted Allama Prabhu (c. 1160). Born in a 'low' caste and broken-hearted over the death of his beloved, Allama chanced upon the skeleton of a saint and found a Linga; the course of his life changed. He

decided to live and die for God. From some of the vachanas it is clear that it was not easy for him to master his grief. But master it he did ; all his thoughts were now centred around his God, Gogeshwara. In one of his vachanas he says, "I was amazed to see the bodiless form of Him on the tip of my mind". He was stern and fearless in his denunciation, of superstition, of mere ritual, and of the practices of sanctimonious humbugs, even in the Veerashaiva fold. He denounced idol worship. His utterances are the vachanas of a 'siddha', of one who has crossed the wilderness of doubt and despair, and attained spiritual enlightenment. "You are your Guru", he declares, "Is there a better Guru?" "The true temple is within the body, what other temple do you need?" "They who cannot mount the steed offered to them but ask for another are neither brave nor heroes." "When a stick floats on water will not waves touch it?" (In the same way, can he who is born in this world escape from the touch of joy and sorrow?), "Consider, an ocean of sorrow for the sake of a mustardseed of happiness" - such utterances illustrate both the trend of his teachings and his gift of happy choice of images. Allama Prabhu also organized the Shivasharanas and created a forum, the 'Anubhava-mantapa' where all those engaged in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment could meet, debate, discuss and share their experiences. (Allama has also composed several 'bedagina vachanas'; these set forth spiritual

experiences in riddles. A 'bedagina vachana' has to be decoded.)

His imagination creates magnificent images. He declares that he and his God would join the earth and the sky, make cymbals of the sun and the moon, and play together.

Akka Mahadevi and Others

A radiant figure among the vachanakaras is Akka Mahadevi (c. 1160). In some ways she reminds us of Saint Meera. The daughter of parents devoted to Shiva, Akka Mahadevi made up her mind early in life that she would have no husband except Channamallikarjuna of Srishaila. But she was forced to marry a chieftain, Kaushika. Even in the palace she remained a devotee of her beloved Channamallikarjuna. When she found that Kaushika had broken the promises he had made she left the palace and travelled to Kalyana, where she met the other devotees and mystics of her faith. The great Allamaprabhu himself questioned her, and was moved to astonishment and admiration by the replies of the young but enlightened woman. She spent her last days in Srishaila.

Many of Akka Mahadevi's vachanas are autobiographical. The intense yearning for Channamallikarjuna and the travails of a beautiful woman who chose an

unconventional life and also set out alone on a long journey are mirrored in them. She says that she has chosen a peerless husband : "I loved the Handsome One who has no death and no disfigurement". She exclaims : "Take away and thrust into the oven these men who are subject to death and decay". She describes vividly in some vachanas her vision of her Lord. She has known calamity - and she can face it : 'Having chosen a habitation on the mountains how can one be terrified of wild animals? Having chosen a habitation on the beach how can one be terrified of the waves? How can one have a habitation in the market and be shy of noise? Listen, Lord Channamallikarjuna, having been born in this world, one should remain calm in the face of praise and blame.' Some of her vachanas are beautiful love lyrics - but the lyrics sung by one whose passion centres round the Immortal Master of the universe. Her language is generally simple, vivid, concrete and picturesque. It has the power of intense passion and the radiance of genuine experience.

Siddharama (c. 1160) is another splendid figure among these mystics. From childhood he dedicated himself to Mallinatha (or Mallikarjuna) and his material resources to the service of his fellowmen. He helped the poor; he gifted wells to villages. He commanded great respect from the best of the Shivasharanas like Allama Prabhu and Basavanna. There are references to him in a number of inscriptions. He stresses honest

devotion to God and compassion for all living beings. He also emphasizes inward purity.

Vachana literature has been enriched by a number of other devotees and mystics like Channabasavanna, Madivala Machaiah, Ambigara Chowdaiah, Molige Maraiah and Muktayakka. Basavanna's two wives, Neelalochane and Gangambike, also have composed vachanas. Neelalochane's vachanas embody her shock and overwhelming grief on the death of her husband. She declares that they were not just husband and wife, but each looked after the other as a child.

Vachana Sahitya : An Assessment

The movement which had Kalyana for its centre was unique. It affected the very basis of individual life and social intercourse. The remarkable thing was that members of all castes and professions and social strata became involved in it, and the poorest man and the social outcast could feel that it had meaning for him and gave him a place – a place with all decent and God-fearing men and women. It was not a movement from above. The greatest leaders of the movement preached and practised the doctrine of the dignity of labour. On the one hand, this underlined the importance of the worth of man as man, the need to respect a man for his morality and integrity: on the other, it prevented idleness in the guise of spiritual endeavour. Society recognized that all professions, whatever

the monetary benefits they yielded to those who followed them, were important and that work which needed to be done for society could not degrade a man. Also, no one could claim that because he was engaged in a spiritual pursuit he need not work with his hands. It is difficult to estimate what the Vachanas did for Kannada Literature. The literature which sprang from the soil of earnest spiritual endeavour, moral earnestness and mystical experience was characterized by strong passion and fidelity to experience. So literature which had been narrative became lyrical. The vachanakaras were not deliberately composing literature. So the vachans have neither the advantages nor the disadvantages of a tradition. They are free and spontaneous utterances. Naturally, some of them are feeble echos of greater spirits; some are not logically convincing; some are just plain statements. But the best of them form an invaluable body of Wisdom Literature. This is an important difference between the Jain poets who came earlier and the Vachanakaras. The Jain poets were conscious of composing literature. They were writing within a literary tradition. They were setting forth accepted values. The kings were the patrons of the religious poetry also. There was little room for the expression of individual striving or experience or doubt. On the other hand, the Vachanakaras were in a sense responsible and earnest rebels. With them literature became the expression of intense individual quest and vision, and personal experience. It was the expression of the

passionate endeavour to realize religious values in individual life. Because some of the Vachanakaras were crude scholars also, the vachanas brought the core of Hindu thought and philosophy within the reach of the common man. The best religious thought was no longer the monopoly of a few. This body of Vachana Sahitya has been described as 'Kannadopanishat' (the Upanishats in Kannada). The vachankaras refused to compartmentalize life and to limit the religious and moral values to certain areas. To say that their compositions were lyrical does not convey the full impact of their vachanas on contemporary life or on Kannada Literature. They combined intense moral fervour and uncompromising puritanism with compassion and tenderness. In many senses they brought literature closer to life, and gave it a new strength, a new relevance, a new justification. Because these vachanas were meant for the common man, and also because at times they were uttered by persons who themselves had little or no education, their language was simple and concrete. At times we hear in them the very sigh of the sadhaka reflecting on his shortcomings or of the man of righteousness watching the ways of the world. We can hear the fall of the tears of anguished seeker of God. Again, with the vachanas, satire entered Kannada Literature as a potent weapon. The earnest and puritanical Vachanakaras poured forth a veritable lava of satire on the heads of the hypocritical and the sanctimonious. It is interesting to recall that they not only

ridiculed the nonbeliever but exposed the pretentious in their own fold. Allama, Basavanna - one and all they were sharply critical of the seekers of luxury. A very important development of the age was the entry of women into communal life as the equals of men, and their contribution to literature. It must be admitted that even in subsequent ages, till recently, few women composed literature. But in the age of the vachanas we have a number of women expressing themselves freely and effectively. Among these were women of no education, women of 'low' birth and women of humble professions. Ramavve and Kalavve were weavers. Mahadevi was a dancer. Sankavva was a prostitute. These women freely express their own spiritual quests and strivings and comment on the ways of society. Mukthayakka is an intellectual; she does not merely bow to authority, she questions and weighs. Lingamma sees Kailasa on the earth. She rejects the view that a spiritual quest demands the mortification of the flesh. Amuge Rayamma speaks stingingly of the false ascetics who go about spouting vachanas and making an exhibition of their renunciation. That a prostitute could openly speak of her spiritual aspirations and experiences bears eloquent testimony to the sense of freedom and equality which the Kalyana movement promoted. But at the same time it promoted the habit of critical self-examination which prevented a facile assumption of spiritual superiority or excellence.

The Vachanas constitute a glorious chapter in the history of Kannada Literature. Their influence on subsequent writing makes interesting study. They influenced poets like Harihara and Chamarasa. While these did not compose Vachanas they were deeply influenced by the spirit and values of Vachana literature. There was, for a long time, no return to royal patronage. Righteous conduct and moral probity remained the test of man's worth. The achievement and the spirit of Vachana literature influenced the Haridasas who came later.

In the last sixty years there has been a remarkable revival of interest in Vachana literature – an interest by no means solely religious. The late M. R. Srinivasamurthy devoted years of loving study to this form. P. G. Halakatti, Uttangi Channappa and several others toiled to recover as much of this priceless composition as possible and to determine the authorship. Writers of all the different epochs of modern Kannada Literature – Navodaya, Pragathisheela, Navya and Bandaya and Dalita – have recognized the spirit of free inquiry and ardent spiritual quest which found expression in the Vachanas. They have all been influenced by the concern for the common man and for the oppressed and the outcastes and stress on personal conduct and the realized experience which characterized Vachana literature. Both the Pragathisheelas and the Bandaya-Dalita Schools have very naturally derived inspiration

from the Vachanakaras' emphasis on the dignity of man as man and the rejection of ritual and mere authority. They have also stressed the repudiation of caste. They have underscored the Vachanakara's desire to be understood by one and all, including the illiterate and the uneducated. It is interesting that even those who are either agnostics or atheists, and in some instances violently against religion itself, have recognized and paid tribute to the moral earnestness, the insistence on purity and rectitude in personal life, and respect for man as man, which characterized the utterances of these fervent devotees of Shiva who were willing to live and to die for God and were intensely religious.

CHAPTER IV — The Return to Poetry

The Vachanakaras, as we have seen, were not consciously composing literature. Moral earnestness, power and illumination often combined in their utterances to transform them into literature. In the thirteenth century there appeared poets who were inspired by the same intense devotion to Shiva as the Vachanakaras but consciously and deliberately composed poetry, paying attention to form and the mechanics of poetry. Their aim, like that of the Vachanakaras, was the edification and education of their audience ; but while the Vachanakaras were lyrical and reflective, and sought to influence the hearers by sharing their experiences with them and also by provoking thought and examination, the poets were mainly narrative, and sought to influence their audience by holding up to their gaze men and women who had dedicated their lives to the Lord, and by unveiling the magnificence and mercy of the Lord.

Harihara

The first of these poets is sometimes humourously known as the 'Ragale Poet'. (The word 'ragale' in

Kannada means fuss or irritation.) This was a reference to the new metre he employed, the 'ragale'. But the first work of this poet, Harihara, was a champu composition - *Girijakalyana*. He was born in the second half of the twelfth century, probably in 1174, and perhaps lived to be a hundred. He was about thirty years old when he composed *Girijakalyana*. He was evidently of a religious temperament even in the early years of his life. He seems to have served a king at Dorasamudra, and then, giving up the service of mortals to serve the Master of the Universe, he settled down in Hampe. From his works it is clear that he was a passionate devotee of Shiva; his successors have depicted him as a man of miracles, one who could expel evil demons and for whom Shiva Himself performed miracles. This much is evident, that there was a man who had known wedded life and service in a royal court, but who soon wearied of all work and service not dedicated to the Lord. He gave up his family, resigned his position, and lived only for his Master. In one of his poems he draws a vivid picture of a man who chooses to serve a mortal master: "To serve men, to keep saying 'My Lord,' 'My Lord', to be abject and humble no matter what the master says, to shrink into oneself, to beg....." Again, "To go if the master says 'Go', to approach submissively if he says, 'Come', to be silent if he says 'Be silent', to tremble and huddle - this kind of service I was able to get rid of, Master of Hampe, because of your compassion."

Harihara is a poet of fierce independence. He warns his fellow-poets not to compose poetry on mere mortals who will die and are despicable, not to praise them as Indras and Devendras or compare them to the sun, to Karna and to Dadhichi. There is but one master worth serving, and that is the Lord of Hampe. Harihara's devotion finds moving utterance in poem after poem. And the admiration and reverence he received from the devotees and the poets who had seen his way of life bears testimony to the purity and integrity of his life and the intensity of his devotion.

Harihara's works are *Pampushataka*, *Rakshashataka*, *Mudigeya Ashtaka*, *Girijakalyana* and *Shivaganada Ragalegalu*. The shatakas comprise a hundred stanzas each and employ a variety of metres. These are mainly autobiographical and at times lyrical; they give expression to the poet's ardent devotion to Shiva and his determination not to be a serf to a fellow-mortal. What can these mortals, mere dolls made of clay, give? The poems also express the poet's renunciation of family ties and his reverence for the devotee of Ishwara.

Girijakalyana narrates the story of the marriage of Ishwara and Girije and includes the famous episode of the death of Manmatha. This is champu work. In all probability, it is an early composition. It is a work meant to win the approbation of the learned.

It is likely Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhava* influenced Harihara's work. But the Kannada poet has made certain changes in the story. Thus, in his narrative, the infant Girija does not open her eyes until a 'shivalinga' is brought to her. Also, after the third eye of Shiva reduces Manmatha to ashes, it is Girija who comforts his grief-stricken wife in the Kannada poem. Harihara's Girije has surrendered herself to Shiva, but yet she displays greater grit and firmness than Kalidasa's heroine. When Shiva appears in the guise of an urchin and denigrates Shiva she strikes him and forces him to reveal who he is. Harihara's art of description finds rich expression here. But it must be confessed that at times Harihara nods. He concedes too much to tradition as, for example, when he drags the sage Narada to where professional prostitutes dwell, just to satisfy the traditional demands on description.

Harihara's originality and genius found full expression in his *Shivaganada Ragalegalu*. How many of these he composed has been a subject of controversy.

Harihara wrote *Girijakalyana* within tradition. In the Ragales he proved to be an original and independent poet, in many ways. His predecessors had gone to the epics for their material. Harihara came soon after a race of titans; some of them were themselves cast in an epic mould. Men and women like

Basavanna, Mahadeviyakka, Allama and Siddharama had changed the destinies of a whole society and transformed their age. Similarly in Tamilnadu nearby the devotees of Shiva had created an atmosphere charged with devotion. Harihara turned away from the mythological characters to the architects of a revolution in the immediate past. The heroes and heroines of poems had so far been men and women of noble birth and high position; Harihara brushed aside all such consideration of high and low. The protagonists of his poems were great because they had acquired greatness – acquired it through single-minded devotion to Lord Shiva. High birth and position were actually sometimes obstacles. Unflinching devotion to the Lord, devotion which the Lord himself had tested and admired, raised them to eminence. Thus, as in the Vachanakaras, there is a new conception of heroism, and a democratic sense of the equality of all men and women. In these 'ragales' Harihara is no longer bound by tradition in the structure of his poem or in his descriptions. Descriptions are brief and functional. Each poem introduces the 'hero' in a few lines, then depicts Shiva's approval and his intention to subject the devotee to a test so that the world may know his greatness. Finally the devotee faces the ordeal with faith and devotion, and the Lord himself is overjoyed. This is the framework of the narratives. For these poems Harihara used the 'ragale'. This is a kind of couplet in which both lines are of equal

length with initial rhyme and end rhyme, and a marked lilt. The couplets in a poem are not fixed in number. No poet before Harihara had composed an entire poem in this metre; it had been used occasionally in the inscriptions, and by poets like Pampa. Harihara mixes it with prose passages also.

Basavarajadevara Ragale and *Nambiyannana Ragale* are among the finest compositions of Harihara and may be taken as representing his poetry at its best. It is worth noting that in the former, which extols the greatness of Basavanna, Harihara chose to write about one who was very close to him in time. The work, as we have it now, is incomplete. The poem is not strictly biographical. Harihara's interest is mainly in the intense religious fervour of Basavanna and his total self surrender. His fearlessness also comes through in the narration. But Basavanna the social reformer and fighter does not quite come alive. Six miracles are also attributed to him. The narration is racy and vivid. Nambiyanna strikes us as nearer humanity than Basavanna. We feel closer to him. A shorter 'ragale', *Pushpa Ragale* is remarkable in that it reveals this robust, vital poet as capable of the most discriminating response to the loveliness of flowers, and of tremulous tenderness. It is exquisitely lyrical.

The '*Ragale*'s reveal Harihara at his best. Descriptions are vivid but compact and functional; occasionally

they are conventional but they are always controlled by a clear sense of relevance and propriety. Description, comparison, simile, metaphor, image - all are controlled by an unfaltering purpose - the glorification of true piety. Harihara is a superb master of language. His magnificent command of the union of sense and sound reaches its splendid peaks in his descriptions of the dances of Shiva. Here the poet touches sublimity in description. His language is picturesque and racy. He has sure command over the pace of his narration. His language is also simple, and here again Harihara was close to the people. He has no doubt that language existed to recount the greatness of the saints and thus to save mankind from error and spiritual ruin.

Harihara had his limitations. Since he chose to tell the stories of the Shaiva saints one story is like another. And the protagonists of the several stories resemble one another. Only one side of their character gets lighted up - they are all devotees who live for their God. But they do not become rounded characters. Some times the poet's zeal takes over.

But with all these limitations Harihara is one of the glories of Kannada poetry. He asserted his independence in life and in literature. He writes with rare gusto. There is power, there is vigour, in his poetry. The vigorous narrative is studded with memorable

dramatic scenes. He chose the 'ragalē' form, and used it with such masterly skill that he avoided monotony with a meter which develops monotony over a long stretch. He cared for the ordinary man, he revered purity of life and simple piety, but he turned his back on pomp and power. His scale of values is implicit in his choice of subject matter, in his rejection of the wearisome conventions and in his language. Harihara taught self-respect to the poet, and charged his own poetry with the power of freedom. It is a pity that as a poet, he was so little interested in contemporary social life and the challenges of the age.

Raghavanka

Raghavanka, the author of the immensely popular '*Harishchandrakavya*' was the disciple and nephew of Harihara. He is one of the few poets of the earlier epochs about whom we have a gratifying body of information. He probably belongs to the late twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth century. Like his great uncle he vowed that he would not sully his poetry with the praise of mortals and that he would recognize no god but Lord Shiva. He won great popularity in his own lifetime and also recognition and honour from kings and learned men. There is a legend that Harihara was displeased with his disciple for narrating the story of Harishchandra, a king, and that, when Raghavanka sought to argue with him and

justify his choice, struck him. None of the poet's later works is about kings; it is therefore likely that *Harishchandrakavya* was his first work. (Some critics are of the view that it was his last composition.)

Like the great Harihara, Raghavanka was a poet with a spirit of independence. He first revealed the potentialities of the 'shatpadi' - the six-line stanza. It had been used sparingly before him. But as Harihara transformed the 'ragale' Raghavanka transformed the 'shatpadi'. And the school he inaugurated lasted longer and yielded greater treasures than Harihara's. Raghavanka showed the way, and Virupaksha Pandita, Laksmisha, Kumaravyasa and Chamarasa (using different forms of the shatpadi) realized its potentialities. It is a metre which lends itself to description, narration, reflection and swift, dramatic dialogue (as Raghavanka and Kumaravysa proved).

Raghavanka's *Harishchandrakavya* begins in heaven, in the court of Devendra. Vashishta affirms that Harishchandra is a man of perfect truthfulness; Vishwamitra, in towering fury and withering scorn, vows to prove him wrong. The scene then shifts to the earth. The story narrates the grinding ordeals to which Vishwamitra subjects Harishchandra, and the latter's unflinching dedication to truthfulness. At the end, as Harishchandra spurns Vishwamitra's offer of mercy and raises the sword to put his beloved wife

to death in the performance of his duty, Lord Vishveshwara of Kashi appears and the story ends happily.

Raghavanka's source was probably the Sanskrit play *Chandakaushika* by Kshemeeswara (10th century). But the episode of the challenge in Devendra's court is not to be found in the play. It was probably suggested by *Devibhagavata*, but Raghavanka has used it brilliantly. Without it the persecution of Harihschandra does not make sense. Raghavanka has created the characters of the lovely maidens born of Vishwamitra's rage; he has added the episode of the prince of Kashi, of Chandramathi being brought to her husband to be put to death, and of the appearance of Shiva to save her. Every modification or addition has an internal and artistic justification. Raghavanka has mastered the art of narration. He holds us spell-bound as the story moves inevitably from one memorable incident to another. Character issues in action, action impinges on character, and so the plot moves by the interaction of incident and character. Character determines action and the grim and prolonged battle goes on, as we watch spellbound. Like Ranna, Raghavanka is a dramatist writing poetry. The dialogues are powerful and strong personalities clash and language becomes all sparks. The fiery clash of the sages in the celestial court, the challenge of the untouchable girls to the mighty monarch, the challenge of the 'low - born'

Anamika to the King of the Solar Race who is now selling himself – every one of these episodes carves and chistles the characters before our eyes. The appearance of Shiva is no convenient 'deus ex machina' to resolve a complication which the stroy-teller is helpless to cope with. It is the inevitable crowning of an uncompromising pursuit of integrity. Shiva proclaims the truth: The sanyasi who tells lies is a holeya (a polluted one); the holeya who does not tell a lie is the greatest of sanyasis.' And when we are told that 'Hara is Truth, Truth is Hara', we accept it, not as a precept put forth by the poet but as the illumination naturally emanating from the action.

This one work suffices to reveal the difference between the master and the disciple. Harihara's heroes are pining to go to Kailasa. In fact, they have in a sense 'fallen' and come to the earth. They are here only to be tested and approved, and then they hasten back to Kailasa. Shiva himself subjects them to severe ordeals. They have no other opponents. The world of Harihara is limited. To Raghavanka the earth is the arena where man learns and ripens. Shiva appears only to mark the end of this process. The hero has not been dragged down to the earth by a curse. Nor is it Shiva who inflicts suffering on him. There is an opponent, a very concrete opponent.

Siddharama Charitra ranks next to *Harishchandra-kavya* among Raghavanka's works. It narrates the

story of the great Veerashaiva saint Siddharama. The poem brings out the evolution of the saint's character. First we see him as one dedicated from birth to Lord Shiva, practically dead to the rest of the world, seemingly inferior to children of his age, but living in the Lord. The meeting with Shiva who appears for a brief while and then disappears draws him to Sonnalige, and to a larger world. Siddharama now moves with his fellowmen but for their sake. Wells and ponds bring them water, and he redeems those under a curse. Then comes the meeting with Allama, who makes him realize his true goal - becoming one with the Lord. Siddharama becomes a mythological character. He is a karma - rudra and a jnani. Description takes second place here; the narrative moves swiftly. But we miss here the kind of clash which we find in *Harishchandra* and which makes both the narrative and the development of character fascinating. The polished scoundrel Billesha Bommayya, driven to theft by poverty and living in pretended reverence for Siddharama, whom the latter saves from hell, is an interesting character.

At a time when the revolutionary spirit which had inspired the Vachanas had begun to cool Harihara and Raghavanka chose and perfected other vehicles - Harihara chose the 'ragale' and Raghavanka the 'shatpadi'. They reaffirmed the faith in man's ability to fulfil his life whatever his birth, and conduct as

the sole measure of a man's worth. In both a strong emotional bond between the Creator and His creatures, based on man's deserving, is axiomatic. Harihara is the more exuberant poet, Raghavanka the more restrained and dramatic. Harihara's 'heroes' are devotees first and last, Raghavanka's 'heroes' have more than this one dimension. Both were original, and turned away from the familiar modes to experiment and find their own media. But Harihara's 'ragales' found no disciples while Raghavanka was followed by Chamarasa, Lakshmisha and Kumaravyasa.

In the Old Tradition

Contemporaries of Harihara and Raghavanka did not quite abandon the old traditions. Nemichandra composed two champu works—*Leelavathi* and *Neminathaapurana*. '*Leelavathi*' is a love-story; it is noteworthy that Neminatha did not go to the epics for material for his nonreligious poem but chose to narrate a romantic tale. The story is thin but the poem abounds in descriptions. The poet has asserted that "woman's beauty is real beauty and 'sringara' the real rasa". *Neminathapurana* is the better work. Poetic genius controls and directs the poet's erudition here. Descriptions are brief and functional, and the characters are real and alive.

The Champu tradition lived on in Rudrabhatta's *Jagannatha Vijaya*. His hero is Sri Krishna. He makes

no distinction between Hari and Hara, and is free from fanaticism. He is the first important Brahmin poet. He belonged to the age of a powerful king, Veeraballala. The childhood and boyhood of Krishna are described in loving detail and this part of the poem is full of beautiful verbal pictures. Krishna emerges as a mighty hero. Rudrabhatta belonged to the age of a great king. Veeraballala, and does praise his patron; but he does not, like Pampa and Ranna, identify his patron-king with his hero. Though a highly devotional poem, *Jagannatha Vijaya* delights the reader because there is ample play of the softer emotions of love and the affection of parents.

A poet who continued the champu tradition with distinction was Janna. His *Yashodhara Charitre* was composed in 1209 and his *Ananthanathapurana* in 1230. His patron - king, Veera Ballala, honoured him with the title of 'Kavichakravarthi' (The Emperor of Poets). He seems to have been a great scholar also. He had the gift of poetry, he was an outstanding scholar, and he was intensely human.

Yashodhara Charitre, comprising some 310 stanzas, is Janna's masterpiece. The story of the beautiful wife of a handsome and loving wife taking an ugly paramour is an old one. Janna's poem is a Kannada rendering of Vadiraja's Sanskrit work, *Yashodhara Charitre*. The object of the poet, a Jain, is to glorify 'Ahimsa'.

Yashodhara is staggered to discover that his wife, whom he has loved with unswerving faithfulness, has become the mistress of a repulsive elephant-driver. (His mellifluous voice has enslaved her). His mother, Chandramathi, ignorant of the true cause of her son's misery, insists on his offering a sacrifice – at least a hen made of flour. But at the moment of death the hen comes to life, cries aloud and falls down dead. The crime in which son and mother are partners condemns them to seven births, the last as children of Yashomathi, Yashodhara's son. The children are taken to be offered as sacrifices to Goddess Mari and then the whole story is unfolded.

The poem is clearly meant to exhibit violence in all its horror. The purpose of the poet is didactic. But the poet is interested in his characters as human beings, and not merely as means to an end. The world he creates is very real to him; look for example, at the description of spring in the grove of Mari when the very season of beauty and joy becomes the manifestation of the spirit of cruelty. The very song of the 'kokila' becomes a mockery of the departing soul. This is the composition of a poet who, despite the avowed didactic and doctrinal purpose, responds to the story as a human being. The surrender of the queen Amritamati to the misshapen paramour has been variously interpreted by critics. But, as Giraddi Govindaraja has pointed out, the story is not to

be read as a realistic work. Also, it is the modern mind that assigns so much importance to the Amritamati episode. To the poet the punishment which Yashodhara and his mother have to undergo for entertaining the thought of sacrifice is important; of course, the later suffering of Amritamati who poisons her husband and his mother reinforces the doctrine that sin invites inescapable punishment. But the episode certainly leads the modern reader to reflect on the strange ways of sexual attraction and the strength of passion. The poet's control over the pace of the narration and the skilful placing of a few 'vrithas' in the course of a narrative in three hundred 'kanda's (a four-line stanza) show that Janna was an artist in verse. The poem builds up a revelation of the complex ways of human nature in a frame of inexorable justice - justice which pursues the offender beyond the grave.

Janna's other work, *Ananthanathapurana*, centres round the fourteenth Thirthankara. There are lengthy descriptions and exposition of Jaina teachings. The poem is memorable for its presentation of the story of Chandashasana. He falls in love with his bosom friend's wife and his nature becomes warped thereafter. She refuses to yield to his entreaties and he even kills his friend hoping thereby to win her in her helplessness. But she falls down dead, and he dies with her corpse in his arms.

Andayya's *Kabbigara Kava* narrates a simple story in a straight manner. It is remarkable for the poet's determined exclusion of Sanskrit words – even the simple ones. It was probably a protest against the excessive use of Sanskrit words and the consequent gulf between the common reader and poetry.

The Age of Harihara and Raghavanka ; An Assessment

The signal achievement of this Age is the creation a new image of the hero. Sway over fellow-martals has nothing to do with the hero of this poetry. (Even Harishchandra is great, not because he is a king, but because of his unswerving devotion to Truth.) The moral fibre alone counts now. In fact, kingship earns disapproval and hostility now. There is room for tenderness and sincere human bonds in this conception of the hero, but he also morally pure and strong, and capable of enduring any hardship for his ideal. Like the utterances of the Vachanakaras, the compositions of this Age show total devotion to God and stress inner purity. But generally the poet chooses to present an image of human perfection and so turns to narrative poetry. Here, once again, we are with poets who are concerned with form, and experiment and choose consciously. *Yashodhara Charitre* is interesting in that it presents a hero who fails and learns through experience. He is nearer common clay (in spite of his perfection of beauty and virtue) than many heroes of Harihara and Raghavanka. Both Harihara

and Raghavanka departed from the literary forms already known, and made brilliant innovations – the former with the ragale and the latter with the shatpadi.

Both Harihara and Raghavanka showed the merciful God watching his devotee from afar, and entering this world of mortals for a few fleeting moments to crown the victory of the devotee. The next great poet, Kumaravyasa, brought the Lord to dwell in the world of mortals, and showed this God denying Himself everything and working tirelessly and mysteriously on the side of righteousness. The idea of a God immanent in His universe assumes a magnificent form here.

CHAPTER V — Kumaravyasa and His Contemporaries

With Kumaravyasa we are in the presence of a genius of the first order. Few poets have enjoyed the reverence and the popularity that Kumaravyasa has enjoyed over the centuries. He is one of the poets who absorb from a tradition whatever gives strength to their peculiar genius, bestow lustre on it and enrich it. He is one of those great poets who accept the values of their age and society but embody an individual vision of life, so that they are at once original and the voice of their age and society.

There are controversies regarding many particulars about this great poet. Accepted critical opinion may be summed up as follows: Kumaravyasa is the pen-name of a poet who lived before 1500, probably around 1450, in the village Kolivadu, and was a devotee of Shri Veeranarayana of Gadag. His real name was Naranappa. He came of an orthodox Brahmin family. It is possible that like his ancestors Naranappa held a high office in the royal court of Vijayanagara. He composed the '*Karnata Bharata Kathamanjari* (popularly known as *Kumaravyasa Bharata* or *Gadugina Bharatha*) based on the first ten 'parva's of Vyasa Bharata. (A

later poet, Thimmanna Kavi, of the sixteenth century, added the seven 'parva's beginning with Shantiparava, in Kannada).

'Kumaravyasa' was either the pen-name chosen by the poet himself or a title bestowed on him by Shri Vyasaraya. The poet has based his story on the first ten 'parva's of Vyasabharata, but is evidently indebted to Pampa. Sri Krishna is his hero. He calls his poem 'Krishnakathe', that is, the story of Krishna. It reveals 'Padumanabhana mahimeyanu', that is, the greatness and the glory of Padumanabha. He is in a way modest; the poet who has composed the poem, he declares, is in fact Veeranarayana; Kumaravyasa is only his scribe. He, Kumaravysa, is the 'kinkara' or servant of Gadugina Veeranarayana. It is in this spirit of humility and reverence for the story he is going to narrate that Kumaravyasa approaches his work. It is the fire which reduces to ashes all sorrow, cleanses the hearer of all sin.

Such an approach sounds dangerous. There is every likelihood of didacticism and preachment taking over the reins. But the poem arouses our wonder by the way it makes Divinity manifest. Lord Krishna who, whether present in a scene or not, seems to fill it, is at once God and man. I wonder if, anywhere in the history of world literature, God has been made so real and so lively, whether any poet

in the world who has dared bring God into his work has endowed him with such a rich sense of humour. Arjuna and Duryodhana go to seek his support in the impending war. Arjuna chooses him in preference to the Yadava army. Krishna draws an amusing picture of himself. He says that he is old now, youth has slipped by, and he can be of no use on the battlefield. He cannot even lift the Chakra. When the Pandavas are in peril because the sage Durvasa is likely to curse them, Draupadi appeals to Krishna. He appears, and she prays to him to save them. He replies, "Lady, we are hungry; is it fair to blame us?" (Draupadi answers, laughing, 'Lord, only devotion rising from a pure mind can satisfy your hunger; we are fickle-minded'!) The very descriptions of Krishna in the poem make him intensely real. Once we see him with a little perspiration on the face, the red dust rising from the hoofs of the galloping horses having just touched his lovely face and added a suggestion of red to the ends of his moustache. As he descends from his chariot he strikes the beholders as a series of flashes of lightning descending from the sky. But with all his liveliness and laughter, for all the friendliness and intimacy with which he moves with the Pandavas, and the unfailing courtesy and respect he shows elders like Bheeshma, he is detached, clear-eyed and ever mindful of his role. He sends Kunti to Karna to beg for a boon, and himself reveals to him the truth about his birth, so that his hatred of the Pandavas is crippled. He

brings about the downfall of Jarasandha and of other arrogant tyrants. But he is not without compassion; even as he taunts and forces Arjuna to kill Karna struggling with the wheel of his chariot (Arjuna, who does not know that Karna is his elder brother, feels a strange but compelling reluctance), he pities him. He knows the folly of Duryodhana's parents, but in their grief he consoles them. Again, Krishna is here the Supreme Power. Let alone the Pandavas and Bheeshma, even Duryodhana once acknowledges that Krishna is in his heart and impels him to refuse to come to an agreement with the Pandavas. But nowhere do we feel that Krishna has robbed the human actors of their freedom of action or of moral responsibility. It is a miraculous steering of the narration. The result is that in the epic we have to see men and women (who seem to represent the very limits of passion and feeling and human strength and weakness) move about and take decision and will and act as their natures impel them, reaping the consequences of their acts, but we are also aware of a very real Presence and Power, all-seeing and all-powerful, but on the side of righteousness, just, and steadily moving towards its goal, but not without compassion, capable of kindness and laughter, but superhuman all the same.

The characters are clearly realized and multidimensional. We feel the clash of powerful personalities

and we see character manifesting itself in word and action. One has only to contrast the words of Yudhistira and Draupadi to Arjuna as he is about to set off for Indrakeela, to see the difference between them. Yudhistira tells Arjuna: "Regard all living creatures as yourself. Do not let illusion corrupt you, let not arrogance make a dent on you....."and so on. Then comes Draupadi to bid farewell: 'Think not of your comfort, remember the pomp of your enemy, forget not what I have suffered and the humiliation of your brothers....' Kumaravyasa can present powerful situations vividly. In the rich and varied world of men and women which Kumaravyasa creates, from the great Krishna and the fiery but much-enduring Draupadi to the tragic Karna and the pusillanimous Uttara one feels, "Here is God's plenty". How rich in humour is the scene of Uttara eager to run away from Brihannale (Arjuna in disguise) who is trying to force him to stand his ground and fight with the Kuru army! Brihannale tells him that if he dies he will go to heaven, there to consort with celestial nymphs. Pat comes the answer: "We do not care for celestial nymphs. We are quite content with the women of our palace." Brihannale may taunt him: "Are you a jeevagalla (a pantaloons)?" Uttara says; "We can teach pantaloons". (He does not discard the royal 'we') Yet we do not despise him but only pity him. Kumara-vyasa can condense a description into a few lines, or add detail to detail and build up a vivid and rich description.

But it is always functional, like the description of the spring in the forest to which Pandu has retired with Kunti and Madri or of Urvasi in Devendra's court. Kumaravyasa is the lord of language. Even to realize how overpowering Kannada can be when one is enraged, one has to go to Kumaravyasa. He has been called the Emperor of Metaphor. Joy and sorrow, anger and contempt, devotion and love, command and persuasion, appeal and sarcasm - Kumaravyasa's language is equal to the demands of any emotion and situation.

This is not to say that Kumaravyasa's poem is flawless. There are occasions when one feels that the poet lets his devotion run away with him. There are situations in which greater restraint was called for. At times we feel that the poet indulges in moralizing. But the poem is full of life and energy, and gives splendid insights into human nature. It ranks among the great creations of poetic genius.

Chamarasa

A contemporary of Kumaravyasa was Chamarasa. He followed in the footsteps of Harihara and Raghavanka and composed a poem narrating the story of the life of a great devotee of Lord Shiva. The hero of his *Prabhulingaleele* is Allamaprabhu. The difference between Harihara's Allama and Chamarasa's Allama is that the former is an evolving soul, the latter a

realized soul. The treatment of the episode of Mayadevi illustrates the difference between the poets. Mayadevi, a lovely damsel, falls in love with Allama. Harihara depicts Allama as experiencing an attraction natural to his youth and later outgrowing and subduing it. But Chamarasa's Allama is never susceptible to woman's beauty. He is close to Mayadevi but untouched by her passion. He is compared to a marble stone and she to a creeper close by, which is burning. The fire is reflected in the stone creating the illusion that it is on fire, but the stone is unaffected. So also, Allama, who accompanies Maya on the drum as she dances, only seems to have been affected, but he is beyond the touch of sensuous passion. The clash between him and Siddharama is interesting. The disciples of Siddharama, who has renounced power and pelf, are busy building a temple at his behest. Allama decries this hankering after fame. Siddharama opens the eye in his forehead and fire issues forth, but Allama tames it in no time. Finally Siddharama realizes that he is in the presence of a great soul and bows to Allama. Allama emerges from the poem as a superman, one endowed with an element of Shiva himself. Chamarasa's language is characterized by simplicity—the simplicity of a master who knows restraint. His description of Mayadevi dancing illustrates how, even employing absolutely simple diction, he can re-create a scene. Movement and feeling are captured here in simple and racy language.

Lives of Saints

The tradition of narrating the stories of the lives of saints in verse was continued by poets like Bhimakavi who wrote *Basavapurana* and Virupakshapandita who wrote *Channabasavapurana*. The latter is much more than a biography, setting forth, as it does, the sport of Lord Shiva as well as the doctrines of Veerashaiva faith. The miracle element in the narration is not extravagant and the references to other faiths show restraint. Unfortunately the poet submits to traditions of 'purana' composition and therefore at times offends against propriety. But his descriptions are marvellous, and the exposition of Veerashaiva doctrines and rituals is in simple language. No wonder that in an age of devotion and intense religious fervour this work gained great popularity. It was later translated into Telugu and Sanskrit. Bheemakavi's work is a Kannada rendering of the Telugu *Basavapuranam*. It narrates the life of Basaveshwara. Basavanna is here both a great devotee and a man endowed with superhuman powers. Basaveshwara the devotee comes to life here, but the dynamic fiery revolutionary is barely suggested.

The Study of the Vachanas

This period attempts a systematic study of the Vachanas of the Veerashaiva sadhakas. The Vachanas were scattered and it was necessary to collect and

collate them. This important work was undertaken by the 'virakta's (or ascetics), one hundred and one in number, in the age of Proudadevarya. They collected the Vachanas, arranged them, supplied the context and offered commentary on them. Among those who undertook this valuable work and did it with devotion were Mahalingadeva (c 1425) Gubbi Mallanna (c 1475) and others. Kallumatada Prabhudeva (c 1430) collected some 720 Vachanas and arranged and commented on them in his *Lingaleela Vilasa Charitra*. These attempts at the collection and collation of Vachanas found their best achievement in *Shoonyasampadane*. Four works of this title have been discovered. The first *Shoonya-sampadane* was the work of Shivagana prasadi Mahadevaiah (c 1400-1430). It was revised three times in the next one hundred and fifty years. In the course of the revision certain versions of incidents in the lives of the Vachanakaras and their experiences were modified. The works are of immense value to the followers of Veerashaiva faith and to all interested in the Vachanas.

The Vachana continued to attract devout Veerashaiva preachers. Both because of its association with the architects of the Veerashaiva upsurge in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and because of its flexibility and freedom the form found favour with those who wished to take their spiritual experiences or to expound the tenets of the Veerashaiva faith to

the people. Tontada Siddheswara of Ediyur (c 1470) is deeply influenced by Basavanna and the other Vachanakaras. The very images used by them re-appear in his vachanas—occasionally with a twist.

CHAPTER VI — The Haridasas

Vachana Literature came from Veerashiva devotees. The masters who employed this form most effectively were also sometimes, like Basavanna, powerful social reformers. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries another tributary enriched Kannada Literature. This was Haridasa Sahitya. The expression 'Haridasa' means 'the servant of God'. The Haridasas were willing vassals of the Lord. They regarded 'bhakti' (or devotion to God) as the way to self-realization and to salvation. Sri Madhwacharya (1238-1317) preached Dualism and gained considerable following. The Haridasas were followers of Madhwa (with the exception of Sri Vaikuntadasa and Sri Thimmappadasa). They stressed the importance of total surrender to God and of a pure life. Traditional Vedic religion had been shaken by the revolution launched by the Veerashiva reformers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the Haridasas deprecated the blind observance of ritual and stressed the importance of right conduct and humility.

The Haridasas were all of them crude men steeped in the scriptures. But they were not content with mastering this lore. They sought to carry their knowledge and vision to every hearth and home.

The essence of the teaching of the scriptures was to be the inheritance of the illiterate and the ignorant. Religion was to be an illumination and not a dead weight. So they married reflection and devotion to music and their songs in simple. Kannada carried their message to thousands of people. Easy to remember and sweet to sing and hear, the songs travelled fast from lip to lip.

Naraharithirtha

The first of the Haridasas was probably Naraharithirtha (14th century). Though none of his Kannada compositions has come down to us tradition has it that he composed some. So far as reliable evidence indicates, Sripadaraya (1406-1504) was the first of the Haridasas. He was the head of a Madhwa mutt (religious institution) in Sriranga in Tamil Nadu, from 1420. (He is said to have become a sanyasi at the age of seven). Subsequently he founded a mutt at Mulabagal, in Kolar District of Karnataka. He is credited with several miracles. It is said that Veerarnarasimha of Vijayanagara worshipped him with diamonds and offered gold ornaments. His songs express the anguish of a devotee who has surrendered everything to God and forsaken wife and children for His sake, and yet has not been vouchsafed God's acceptance. The 'dasya' bhava (a willing servant's feeling) which characterizes Dasa Sahitya first finds

moving expression in these songs. His songs are allusive, and rich in references to mythology. This, in fact, is a characteristic of all Haridasa Songs. He has also composed a number of songs about the boyhood of Krishna. Some of them look at the Divine Child's doings through the eyes of the loving yet bewildered mother, Yashoda.

Vyasaraya

Ignoring strict chronology we may consider here the Haridasa tradition. The next great name in Dasa Sahitya is that of Sri Vyasaraya (1447-1539). He seems to have been a dynamic man, who helped the great Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagara, and was honoured by him. A big tank, his gift to the people, to this day bears the name, 'Vyasasamudra'. A great scholar and a brilliant man who led a great life - such was Vyasaraya. Only a few of his Kannada compositions seem to have been preserved. As poetry his songs centering around Krishna and the gopis are more valuable than those about Dwaitism. But, as critics have said, Vyasaraya's greatest contributions are Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa. The Kannada songs were sung as part of the worship of the Lord, and thus Kannada came into its own in a new way.

Purandaradasa

With Purandaradasa (c. 1484-1564) and Kanakadasa (c. 1508-1606) the Haridasa movement reached its

zenith. Like the Vachanakaras they employed Kannada for a variety of purposes – for exposition of philosophy in simple language, for reflection on life, for social criticism, for satire and for lyrical songs. Unlike the Vachanakaras they were consciously combining literary expression with the discipline of music. The plea of 'literature for the people' received further impetus from their practice. Because they married reflection or instruction to music they were able to reach a wide circle of people and their literary creations were remembered easily and travelled from lip to lip,

Purandaradasa is a fascinating figure in the history of Kannada Literature. Many legends have grown around him, and much of what they tell us may be rejected as the contribution of devoted followers. But even the glimpses we get in his compositions, of his life before he became a Haridasa and of the trials of his devotion and purity later, make him an extraordinarily interesting man. There is little doubt that he was a very wealthy but miserly jeweller and that some traumatic experience, in which his wife played a significant role, led him to a willing acceptance of poverty and the service of the Lord. In all his songs there are references to his patron deity, Purandara Vittala. We are not certain when he was born and when he died. But he must have lived between 1465 and

1565. He travelled extensively, and wherever he went he created a religious awakening. He himself was a radiant example of total surrender to the Lord and the joy of this surrender. He taught not only dedication to the Lord but a life of simplicity and purity. His compositions are said to number more than four lakh and even now we are not certain of the authenticity of several songs attributed to him. But he is acknowledged to be 'the father of Karnatak Music' (Karnataka Sangeeta Pitamaha).

Purandaradasa proclaimed the supremacy of Vishnu, but there is nothing derogatory to the dignity of Shiva in his songs. In fact he has praised Shiva, too. The universe bears testimony to the power of God. God is immanent in the world, and it obeys His will. It is for man to realize the true purpose of his life which is to attain salvation and not let the pleasures of the senses eclipse this. The Lord is merciful; He delights in the goodness and the greatness of His devotee. He responds gladly and eagerly to the appeal of a true devotee. Sincerity and right conduct are important. Purandaradasa does not insist on the renunciation of family life. He describes it as 'hesige samsara', that is, repulsive, but one has to swim and survive, stay in the family and conquer its temptations. 'Let me have the good fortune of a family', he says in one song, 'and let me be fortunate enough to remember the enemy the Kamsa (Krishna)'.

He has called on people not just to repeat the name of the Lord but to do good deeds and to help others. He rejects caste. He calls on people to learn to love everyone – even a foe. Some of his songs describe Lord Krishna's boyhood, and his passionate love of the Wonder Boy finds simple but joyous expression in them.

We need not here consider Purandaradasa's contribution to music, which is invaluable. There is no doubt that he was born with a poet's sensitiveness and vision. In some songs Krishna the enchanting lad before our eyes. We see the lovely boy bedecked by his doting mother; we see the very movement and smile and gesture of the boy. Purandaradasa satire is pungent in a song like 'Udaravairagyavidu' (This is renunciation for the sake of the belly). He draws a satirical picture of the worshipper who looks like a seller of bronze wear, so many idols he has; he has lighted many lamps; but his worship is all hypocritical. He is critical of the man who is not generous and the woman who shuts the door in the face of the needy. His heart goes out to the young widow shedding silent tears as she slaves for others.

The range of experience that go into these compositions and of the saint's responses makes his creative literature a treasure. It must, however, be conceded that religious tenet or philosophical exposition or direct preaching sometimes overrides the poetic

element. (It must also be remembered that to the Dasas poetry and music were means to an end). The expression is at times simple but bald and prosaic. But with all these limitations and the limitations imposed on him by the tradition which he willingly accepted, impassioned plea and vivid imagery and unembroidered expression often blend to give us genuine poetry. He can use telling images 'Do ants converge on burning red hot coal'? 'Like a hungry cat; eating cotton; Like a calf seeking milk from a stone cow') He can charge simple everyday Kannada with deep reflection. Indeed it is surprising to how many purposes he is able to harness the spoken idiom of everyday life. Philosophy, the values of right conduct, the devotion of a saint, the vision of an Immanent and kindly Power, the delights of motherhood, verbal portraiture of grace of movement and the joy of music, music itself—there is so much to delight the reader in Purandaradasa's compositions.

Kanakadasa

Kanakadasa is as interesting as Purandaradasa. If the latter was a rich jeweller who renounced wealth the former was a chieftain who probably belonged to the Kuruba caste. If tradition is to be believed he was no mean warrior. But he tasted crushing defeat once and was himself mortally wounded. He came to believe that only divine grace had saved his life

and became a Haridasa. Thus, because of the community into which he was born, he did not have the opportunities that the other Haridasas had to study the scriptures or acquire knowledge. And yet he is one of the greatest Haridasas. Petty men seem to have illtreated him because of his supposed low birth, and there is a story of his having been humiliated in Udipi and of the Lord Himself having miraculously revealed his worth.

Kanakadasa's total surrender to the Lord has found expression in some moving songs like *Bagilamu Theredu Thanu Ninnadu Jeevana Ninnadu* and *Thoredu Jeevisabahude*. The poet declares that his body, his life and the joys and sorrows of everyday life belong to the Lord. He cannot live without thinking of the feet of the Lord. In a popular song Kanakadasa points out that God takes care of the worms in the rocks, the animals and the fowl of the forest; he asks his mind not to worry about the future. God takes care of all created beings like a mother. There is trenchant social criticism in the songs of Kanakadasa - songs like *Kula Kula Kulavennuthiharu*. Philosophy acquires the radiance of poetry in some of his songs. Apart from his songs Kanakadasa also composed poems; the longest of these is *Mohana Tarangini* which narrates the story of the defeat of Banasura at the hands of Sri Krishna. Descriptions are prominent in this poem, and they give us pictures

of the life of the people under the great king Krishna-devaraya of Vijayanagara. This poem is meant to be recited or sung. The story of Nala and Damayanthi is narrated in *Nalacharitre*; the poet uses the 'shatpadi' here. Description is skilfully woven into the narration in this poem, and the story moves swiftly. *Ramadhanya Charitre* is an interesting poem which indicates the importance of 'ragi', the black grain which serves as the poor man's staple food; the story is placed in the times of Sri Rama, and is entirely the invention of Kanakadasa. The poem has been variously interpreted - as the expression of God's love for the poor and the humble, as a satire on mere show, and as the first expression of class conflict. His *Haribhakthisara* is the very epitome of implicit faith in God's wisdom and mercy; it does not narrate any one story but is rich in allusions. But the emphasis on a clean life and the practice of religious precepts is significant.

The Vachanakaras and the Haridasas

The Vachanas and the Keerthanas (the compositions of the Haridasas) invite comparison. They have much in common. Both were the compositions of devout persons to whom the spoken word was a means of glorifying the Lord and awakening their fellowmen to the need to realize their true destiny. Both schools included mystics. Neither the Vachanakaras nor the Dasas were primarily concerned with

producing literary works. And yet both left behind a considerable body of compositions which are valuable as literature. Both preached total surrender to the Lord with faith in His wisdom and mercy but also stressed right conduct and purity of personal life. Both denounced hypocrisy. Some in each school were social reformers and denounced superstition, the caste system and empty ritual. Both were close to the people and endeavoured to carry their message to the common man. Their language was, therefore, simple and direct. The architects of both movements were erudite scholars learned in the scriptures but they sought to convey the philosophical core of their faith to the humblest man, in language he could understand. They declared that God's grace and salvation were open to the lowest and most ignorant if only they chose the path of true devotion and an unblemished life. Both the Vachanakaras and the Haridasas willingly renounced pleasure and wealth but neither advocated total sanyasa; many of them were themselves married and had children. In their compositions both on the one hand, identified themselves with the worst sinners and pleaded before the Lord as unworthy men whom only His mercy could redeem, and, on the other hand, regarded themselves as entrusted with the mission of guiding their fellowmen; the two roles are inconsistent logically but do not strike us so in the compositions themselves.

The differences between the two schools are also sharp. For one thing, the Vachanakaras were devoted to Lord Shiva, the Haridasas to Vishnu. (Shiva is praised in some of the songs of the Haridasas.) The Vachanakaras preached Veerashaivism, the Haridasas Dwaithism (Dualism). The Vachanakaras used poetic prose and forged a medium of their own. The Haridasas composed songs; Purandaradasa is even today honoured as the Father of Karnatak music. The Vachanas are set to music and sung; this is because of the subtle rhythm in the glowing prose of the best Vachanas.

Some of the Songs of the Haridasas show the influence of some of the Vachanas, particularly of Basavanna.

CHAPTER VII — The Medieval Period : the Last Phase

Before we turn to Lakshmisha, a poet who won and has sustained a rare popularity we may glance at a few other poets. The first of these is Thimmanna Kavi, of the court of Sri Krishnadevaraya. Kumaravyasa narrated the story of the first ten parvas of the Mahabharata. Thimmanna Kavi says that the King commanded him to complete the epic. So his *Krishnarajabharata* narrates the story from the Streeparva to the Shanthiparva. He cannot compare with Kumaravyasa in power or sustained vision. His narrative is simple and straightforward. He faithfully follows Vyasabharata. A greater poet was Nanjundakavi, the author of *Ramanathacharia*. The hero of the poem is Kumararama. Kumararama was a historical figure — the son of Kampilaraya, the chieftain of Hosamaledurga. His was a brief but glorious life; he covered himself with glory when the forces of the Delhi Sultan attacked the little state. But he is even more honoured and mourned for the fate which befell him. His stepmother fell in love with him and forced herself on him but he would not countenance her conduct. The woman misled her doting husband and he wanted to put him to death.

But a sane minister saved his life, unknown to the King, and later Kumararama died fighting the enemies who had invaded the capital. Too late the old ruler realized his folly. This is the first historical poem in the language. It is also the first heroic poem. Mythology is woven into the narrative which is not strictly historical; but the characters still remain convincingly human. The episode of Ratnaji's attempt to seduce Kumararama is narrated with vividness and dramatic power. The two main characters are realized clearly and convincingly – the woman reduced to the level of a mere animal by her overmastering passion, and the man rising above frail mortal nature in his uncompromising purity and nobility. The poem is in the sangathya metre. It also gives clear pictures of contemporary life. Kumara Valmiki, whose *Ramayana* is generally known as *Thorave Ramayana*, closely follows Valmiki. He is influenced by Kumaravyasa. He narrates the story clearly and compactly. His work, in the shatpadi metre, has been very popular.

Lakshmisha

Lakshmisha is one of those poets in the history of a community who take poetry to the common man. For four centuries, like Kumaravyasa's poetry, his poetry has echoed in temples and small halls in villages as in crowded academic groves and sophisticated gatherings. There was a time when being able

to read and explain Lakshmisha was the test of a man's education.

We know little about this poet. His father's name was Annamanka - this we know from the poet himself; and also that he was of Bharadwaja Gothra and that he called his work 'Vimala Jaimini Bharatada Kathe'. (It is popularly known as Jaimini Bharatha) He was probably known as Lakshmisha and Lakshmi-pathi, and had been awarded the title 'Karnata Kavi Chootavanachaitra'. He lived around 1550. His poem seems to have appealed to the common man and also won high praise from the learned.

The story relates to the 'Ashwamedhaparva' of the Mahabharata. But the Kannada work owes more to the Sanskrit Jaimini Bharata than to Vyasa Bharata. In effect, it is a bunch of stories of great devotees rather than a single well-knit story. There are two frames to this collection of stories. The entire story is supposed to have been narrated to King Janamejaya by Jaimini at the time of the Sarpayaga. After the Mahabharata War, Dharmaraya who knew no peace of mind, decides to perform the Ashwamaedhayaga, on the advice of Vedavyasa. The poem presents a sequence of events following the decision to let the chosen steed wander at will. This gives the poet an opportunity to present a galaxy of the brave and the devoted; some of them combine intense devotion to Sri Krishna

with exceptional valour. The story also enshrines the greatness of Sri Krishna and God's boundless love for his devotees. The stories of Neeladhwaja, Hamsadhwaja (which includes the moving episode of Sudhanwa), Babruvahana, Mayuradhwaja and Chandrahasa have become immentely popular. Woven into this fabric is the story of Seethaparithyaga (the Repudiation of Seetha); this part of the poem is among the best known passages in all Kannada poetry.

Lakshmisha relied on the Sanskrit Jaimini Bharata. But the master of narrative that he is, he has omitted, and modified so skilfully and has presented the sequence of events with such perspective that his work is a transcreation rather than a translation. First and foremost, Lakshmisha is a superb story-teller. He has brushed aside needless descriptions and dialogues. Some of Lakshmisha's own descriptions are deservedly popular but he has shown discrimination and restraint. Secondly, he has transformed a 'purana' - a work mainly religious - into a poem, with the human interest paramount. Thirdly, his characters are simple but intensely human. This is a story of many battles but the gentler and softer emotions have ample play here. The love of parents for the son, conjugal love, simple human compassion (such as moves the city folk to help Chandrahasa) - feelings and motives to which even the unsophisticated audience can respond; the 'primal sympathies' as it were,

find ample scope in his narration. The running thread of devotion to God - 'bhakti' - bestows unity on the work. Fourthly, his use of language endears him to the reader. He is a lord of similies. The comparisons are apt and striking. There is little 'kavisamaya' or cliché in Lakshmisha. The comparisons issue from his mint. Also, he extracts music from words as few poets can. With all this, Lakshmisha is not a major poet. The reason is that he has no vision of his own, no individual response to life which illuminates the whole work. He is also at times in love with the more ornaments of poetry. He lets a figure of speech, or the sound of words carry him away. But he is a poet who affords genuine delight. He is a poet one would not let slide into oblivion.

Ratnakaravarni

Ratnakara was probably a contemporary of Lakshmisha. He is the author of *Bharathesha Vibhava*, another popular poem. It narrates the story of the great emperor Bharata, who later wearies of pleasure and dedicates himself to a spiritual pursuit. The story had already been narrated by Pampa and Chavundaraya, but as part of a larger pattern. Bharata is Ratnakara's hero. The grandeur and the luxury of the life of Bharata who has ninety - six thousand wives and lives in the lap of luxury and pleasure is drawn in dazzling colours. Ratnakara has also tried to bestow on the hero the aura of a jina;

instead of the five 'kalyana's of the Jina, Bharata has been granted five 'vijaya's—Bhogavijaya, Digvijaya, Yogavijaya, Arkakirthivijaya and Mokshavijaya. The poet's object is the reconciliation of 'bhoga' (enjoyment) and 'yoga'; his hero, a man of rare prowess who strides from victory to victory (until his encounter with his brother Bahubali) and who has pursued as far as human flesh and blood can, the delights of this world, (it is important to remember that his enjoyment is always guided by Dharma) is also not attached to them; he is in this world of pleasure but not of it. Even as he is apparently immersed in enjoyment his inner eye opens and he loses himself in the contemplation of the Infinite. The Bharata of Ratnakaravarni is different from the Bharata of the earlier poems. He is not the intoxicated victor demanding that his brothers should humble themselves before him. On the other hand he is affectionate and sends word to Bahubali that he wishes to see him. Ratnakara has also composed shatakas (sequences of about a hundred stanzas each). In *Ratnakaradhishwara Shataka* he expounds Jaina theological concepts.

In recent years critical opinion has leaned to the view that Ratnakaravarni's attempt to reconcile a life of dazzling luxury with the spirit of renunciation and detachment has ended in but qualified success. The

spiritual rising to serenity and detachment in the midst of enjoyment that the gods might envy becomes a formula. But *Bharateshavaibhava* is a poem charged with an individual vision of life: it is a vision which pervades and determines every detail. The rich descriptions themselves slide into the total pattern.

Sarvajna

One of the brightest names in the history of Kannada literature is that of Sarvajna. He is pre-eminently the People's Poet. Lines and whole stanzas (he used the 'tripadi' or the three-line meter) composed by him are on people's lips. Village elders cite his sayings as the last word on any subject. Some of his 'Vachana's (so they have come to be called, although his compositions are in strict metrical form) are nuggets of wisdom while some others are capsules of prudence.

We do not have much authentic information about the life of Sarvajna. In a way he is the most allusive of poets. His Vachanas seem to throw out so many hints about his life, but it is difficult to assert anything with confidence. He is so popular and revered that he is sometimes regarded as a servant of Lord Shiva born on earth. One of his own Vachanas suggests that probably his father was a Brahmin and a chance meeting with a Kumbhari maiden kindled

love in them and Sarvajna was their son. He was born in a town called Amballuru, in Dharwad District. He probably lived in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, in the period of gloom and disorder following the fall of Vijayanagara. Evidently he led a nomadic life, spending a week here and a day there, watching the ways of the world, interested in men's behaviour but himself craving nothing, aloof, deached, but not uninterested or unfeeling. He was an ascetic but he could understand, and respond to whatever was good or beautiful in the world around him. [Take, for example, his tribute to life in the malnad, (the hilly part of Karnataka) or his description of a pleasant life. The latter may be translated as follows: 'A warm house, gold to spend, And a wife who can understand the husband's mind, (If you have these) set fire to heaven]. The Vachanas also suggest that his blunt criticism of the ways of the world earned him considerable hostility.

There is no conceivable subject on which Sarvajna does not have something original or sensible or stimulating to say. He seems to have lived in a period when once again mere ritual and show were waxing. He denounces them and stresses the importance of inward purity. "To him who thinks of God in his mind, what difference is there between temple and home? And, if God does not dwell in one's mind what is the use of one's spending all one's time in

the temple?" The true Guru illuminates the whole universe. It is through him that a man can find salvation. But Sarvajna also emphasizes the importance of honest labour - with thrift. He describes picturesquely the plight of the man confronted by his creditor. He also warns man that they themselves are their best friends and worst enemies : "Say not that the eye, the tongue and the mind are yours. Say not that others ruined you. These three can destroy a man". There is no God, proclaims this realist, to equal the God of Food. So one can go on serving slices of wisdom from Sarvajna's rich stock. The metre he chose - the 'tripadi' or the three - line stanza with initial rhyme - reinforced the epigrammatic finality of expression. Here was a poet who was of the people, who had moved freely and with an alert eye and keen mind, with people of all strata and classes. His utterances come home to men's business and bosom, and also stimulate them to reflect on the ultimate purpose of life.

When all this has been said, the question still remains : can we accept Sarvajna's compositions as poetry? They are in the nature of proverbs. The best of them are terse and picturesque, they are catholic and wise, but are they poetry? Their chief drawback is that they lack context. They are stimulating observations which have charmed and cautioned and guided men and women, so that Sarvajna has a place in the everyday life of generation after generation.

Chikkadevaraja and His Court

We are now in the age of Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar (1672-1704) the famous ruler of Mysore. He was a powerful ruler who ensured peace and order within the state and saved it from attack from without. He was an administrator of rare ability. He was also a patron of the fine arts, and himself a writer. Several poets like Thirumalaraya, Chikkupadhyaya, Sanchi Honnamma, Singararya and Thimmakavi enjoyed royal patronage. The other works produced by these writers are not of high quality. But Kannada prose received serious attention and developed in this period.

Chikkadevaraja is said to have been the author of *Bharata Vachana*, *Chikkadevaraja Binnapa* and *Geetha Gopala*, in addition to a couple of unimportant works. The first of these is a prose rendering of several parvas of the Mahabharata. The *Binnapa* is inspired by a spirit of complete surrender to God; it is also a simple exposition of the Shrivaishnava philosophy. *Geethagopala* is a collection of songs glorifying Sri Krishna, some of them lovely indeed. Thirumalaraya's works afford some historical information, although the narrative is often romanticized.

Two writers who belonged to the court of Chikkadevaraja merit particular mention. One of

them is Sauchiya Honnamma (the word 'sanchi' means a bag). She was in the service of the king. Her *Hadibadeya Dharma* sets forth the way of life of a chaste woman. This is a work which has received high praise from critics; but when all is said and done, it must be conceded that it is a work which enshrines the values of life tradition has recommended to women over thousands of years. There is a spirited plea for not treating woman as inferior; the poetess asks: "Is not everyone's mother a woman? Did not a woman bring up everyone of us? Why do stupid blind people decry women?" Honnamma writes in simple, clear Kannada - Kannada which has the virtues of good prose. She is to be remembered as the first woman (apart from the mythical Kanthi) who wrote literature in Kannada, and for her simple, chaste and limpid style.

The other person who must be mentioned is Singararya, the brother of Thirumalarya, who wrote *Mitravinda Govinda*. This is the first extant play in Kannada. Kannada drama has quite a long history. There is a reference to a theatre in an inscription of the eleventh century. Pampa, Ranna, Durgasimha - all refer to dramatic performances. The Folk Theatre has a long history of its own. And yet we do not have a single play in Kannada before *Mitravinda Govinda* - and even this is nothing to be proud of. It is a poor adaptation of the Sanskrit play, *Ratnavali*, by Sriharsha.

Shadaksharadeva

There is one poet of this age, not belonging to the court of Chikkadevaraya though probably well known to him, whom we must consider before we go on to study the long interregnum before the Modern Period. The poet is Shadaksharadeva. He was an ascetic and was probably the head of a mutt or religious institution. We know for certain that his *Rajashekhara Vilasa* was completed in 1654 or 1655, and his *Basavaraja Vijaya* in 1677. Like Harihara he refused to employ his pen in the service of mortals and to glorify any god except Lord Shiva. He composed poems both in Sanskrit and in Kannada. He chose the champu form and thus a form which seemed to have lost vitality was rejuvenated by him. He is the last of the great poets in the champu tradition which was so gloriously inaugurated by Pampa.

His first work, *Rajashekhara Vilasa* is based on the *Bhava Chintaratna* of Gubbi Mallanarya (c 1513). It is a story which brings out the greatness of the name of Shiva. Shadaksharadeva has modified the story at several points, and the modifications are invariably improvements. The narration is heavily interlaced with description; the descriptions are themselves interesting and vivid. The use of pathetic fallacy is ingenious. The poem is in no small measure erotic but the story of Thirukolavinachi, the hapless mother whose child is

crushed under the galloping hooves of the aristocrat's steed, is movingly narrated. *Shabarashankara Vilasa* is another popular poem of Shadaksharadeva. It centres round the duel between Shiva who seeks to test his devotee Arjuna and appears in the guise of a hunter, and Arjuna engaged in 'tapas' to please Lord Shiva and gain a boon from Him.

There are other writers of the period who continued earlier traditions with some measure of success. There is, for example, Jagannathadasa (c. 1728-1809) who continued the tradition of the Haridasas in a challengingly uncongenial environment, at a time when Muslim rulers were powerful in the South. His *Harikathamritasara*, composed when he was in his sixties, expounds the Dualistic Philosophy in simple language. He is said to have been a giant of a scholar; but the poem itself is in strikingly simple language. His songs set forth the greatness of the Haridasas or else glorify God's boundless mercy.

But we may well regard Shadaksharadeva as the last significant poet of the Medieval Period. The next writer of importance is Nandalike Lakshminarappa who is popularly known as Muddana. He was born in 1870. Between Shadakshara and Muddana we have a number of writers, but their study is not very rewarding. Muddana is the bridge between Medieval Literature and Modern Literature.

The Last Phase : An Assessment

At this point we may pause to survey the last phase of Medieval Literature, the period of the post-Haridasa Literature. (We must, however, note that the Haridasa tradition lived on. Only for the sake of convenience we are dating this last phase from the death of Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa.) What strikes us first is the comparative shrinking in the range of experience that goes into a work, as well as the diminution in the strength and response of the characters presented. In Kumaravyasa, Krishna does not change. But look at the range of experience to which the Pandavas are subject; you can see them, made of stern stuff, reacting to experience and you can see the impact of experience on them. You watch the process of their ageing. In Chamarasa, too, you have a convincing clash of very real and tough giants. You get to know the characters in the works of both these poets from many angles. But there is a certain repetition in Lakshmisha. The characters are more predictable and simpler. In Chikkadevaraja Wodeyer and the poets of his period the process continues. The experience of being in a complex world which the earlier works afford is absent in the later works. Description takes up a greater proportion of the later poems. The introspection and the identification with the humble sinner which we find in Haridasa Sahitya and which brings

it so close to common clay is also absent in the later works. Sarvajna is great in his own way. We go to him for pithy observation, for frank and at times pungent criticism, for a sensible perspective; but he does not offer the kind of imaginative experience which we associate with poetry. In fact, both in him and in Honnamma we find qualities of good prose. And prose came to be used for a variety of purposes in the days of Chikkadevaraja.

Now that we are on the threshold of the Modern Age. We may pause to survey the literature of the Medieval Period, spanning seven centuries. At the beginning of this period came a movement of strong religious fervour—the movement of the Shiva-sharanas; the spirit of unquestioning surrender to God and the vision of an Omnipresent, Omniscient and Almighty Power found their finest expression in Kumaravyasa; a little later came the Haridasas, inspired by the same vision and also singing their way to social reformation. At the beginning of this period are the Shivasharanas full of moral energy, the willing vassals of the Lord; at the end is Shadaksharadeva, who composes a biography of the greatest of the Shivasharanas, in verse.

So the whole of the literature of the Medieval Period springs from religious devotion and moral fervour. (We can see how this literature is, in this

way, a continuation of the literature of the Classical Age. Only, in that literature, there is not the same moral energy and the desire to reform the erring fellow-mortals). Sometimes, like the Vachanakaras, the Haridasas, and the authors of *Harishchandrakavya* and *Hadibadeya Dharma*, the poet seeks to enlighten and guide the reader; sometimes poetry to him is the means of exploring his own religious and spiritual experiences. There is no agnostic or atheist among these writers, so far as preserved records show. (It is quite possible that the composition of a questioning or rebellious spirit would be so frowned upon that it would be consigned to oblivion.) A genuinely democratic spirit enters this literature at the beginning of the Medieval Period itself, with the Shivasharanas. The essential dignity and equality of all men and women is proclaimed again and again in this period; Honnamma expressly raises her voice on behalf of women. Dependence on patron-kings disappears at the very dawn of this period. Some of the most important figures here (like Basavanna and Vyasaraya) may be associated with kings; but it is never as seekers of patronage or willing admirers. Every human being is endowed with a soul; everyone is endowed with one soul, and not even the mightiest monarch is endowed with two souls. So it is the kinship of moral and spiritual striving that is important. Man is seen against a cosmic background and against the background of many births. Life derives its meaning from

spiritual striving and its highest prize is the approval of God and release from the cycle of birth and death. (But it must be remembered that men like Basavanna and Vyasaraya took an active part in the affairs of the state and society).

The Classical Age is the Age of Jain poets. At the beginning of the Medieval Period the Shivasharanas, burning with devotion to Shiva, burst upon the literary scene. The Veerashaivas continue to write up to the end of this period; as we saw the last important poets of this period were Sarvajna and Shadakshari. Rudrabhatta was the first important Brahmin poet. Later came Kumaravyasa and the Haridasas. But this does not mean that the Jains were superceded. Ratnakaravarni was a Jain poet. (In the Modern Period, happily, not only Hindus of different subjects but non-Hindus, like the Christians and the Muslims, have enriched Kannada Literature).

Champu reigned supreme in the Classical Age. The moral energy of the Shivasharanas demanded another form, and the Vachana became a magnificent vehicle. Combining the resources of prose and verse, and without a fixed length, it proved equal to the demands of lyricism, reflection, exhortation and satire. (Writers like S. V. Ranganna and Siddaiah Puranika have gone back to the Vachana form in the twentieth century). But the champu continued to be employed, and some important works of the Medieval Period

like Janna's two poems, Andayya's *Kabbigara Kava*, Nagavarma's *Karnataka Kadambari*, Durgasimha's *Panchatantra*, Harihara's *Girijakalyana* and Shadaksharadeva's *Rajashekhharavilasa* are champu works. Two new verse forms, ragale and shatpadi, also appeared in this period. The ragale was practically Harihara's Bow of Ulysses but the shatpadi yielded a rich harvest. Kumaravyasa and Chamarasa used it with superb success. It is interesting that modern poets like Bendre, Narasimhaswamy and Venkateshamurthy should have used the shatpadi. The sangathya and the tripadi were other verse forms employed in this Age. The Haridasas composed songs and married words to music in the cause of the Lord. Their influence has been abiding and among those who have followed them are Masti Venkatesha Iyengar and Betageri Krishna Sharma.

This survey gives some idea of the spirit of experimentation at work in this period. But yet it must be admitted that the range of literary forms was limited. The absence of drama is incredible. The Folk Theatre has been alive in Karnataka and a force in the cultural life of the masses. Ranna and Raghavanka should have written plays, they were born dramatists. Drama might have led to a different exploration of community life and a work like *Mrichakatika* might have appeared. One would expect that a work like *Vaddaradhane* would lead to the development of the story. But it did not happen.

On the whole, this literature is avowedly didactic. It is closely related to religion. It draws its material largely from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata and the lives of the saints. When a revolutionary like Harihara turns to the immediate past, he glorifies the great devotees. A good deal of the poetry is evidently composed to be recited at large gatherings, and this has certain implications. Whatever would appear significant in close reading can be of no effect here. Again, the accepted values of the community have to be enshrined in such works. Within these limitations, the literature of this period is rich and rewards study. Kumaravyasa creates a world of his own. Vachana Sahitya and Haridasa Sahitya offer a rich store of religious and mystic experience. They also provide a fiercely honest investigation of the values of life. From the works of Harihara and Raghavanka emerges new type of 'hero'. It is necessary to read this literature in its historical, economic and social context - as the product of epochs for ever darkened by wars and civil wars, and a society dependent on the moods of Nature for sustenance, a society in which the greater part of even hard and back-breaking work had to be done by man without the assistance of modern machines, a society largely comprising rural population, and sustaining a hierarchy.

CHAPTER VIII — The Interregnum

It is strange but true that for about two centuries Kannada Literature had to be content with minor writings. Shadaksharadeva, as we saw earlier, composed his works in the second half of the seventeenth century. This was also the age of Chikkadevaraja and the poets he patronized. Muddana's *Ramaswamedha*, which, as has already been said, points to the dawn of a new age, was published in 1898. The ninetecntwenties saw the publication of B M Srikantia's *English Geethagalu*, and Masti Venkatesha Iyengar's stories. The Modern Age had dawned.

But the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a comparatively barren stretch.

Not that no literature was written at all. We have already referred to Jagannathadasa ; the Dasa tradition was continued by Vijayadasa, who expounded both the philosophy of the Path of Devotion and the Vedic philosophy in simple language, by Prasanna Venkatadasa who wrote some fine songs of considerable length, by Gopaladasa and Mohanadasa. Similarly, the Vachana tradition attracted Ganadasai Veeranna and Kadasiddhesha (who shows the influence

of Urdu). Poets like Somanathakavi and Harishwara composed poems using the shatpadi (the six - line stanza). The sangathya was the chosen vehicle of poets like Brahmakavi and Payanamuni. Chandra-sagaravarni experimented with different metres. But none of these was a poet of the stature or genius of a Kumaravyasa or Ranna who could write within a tradition, exploiting all its resources, and at the same time illuminating his work with an independent vision, and exploring the resources of the language and laying bare new sources of strength.

It is imposible to account for the appearance of paucity of creative genius. How are we to explain the birth of three of the world's greatest dramatists - Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripedes - within a few years of each other in a small city like Athens in the fifth century B.C.? One of the great writers of ancient Israel, the unknown author of *The Book of Job* was born when the Israelites were enslaved and their fortunes were at a low ebb. So no entirely satisfactory explanation for the poverty of Kannada Literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be attempted. But certain contributing causes we may glance at.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were politically disturbed and conditions were unsettled. Aurangzeb died in 1707, and already the power of the Mughals was waning. The Marathas were waxing

strong in the South. Gradually they gained control of part of Karnataka to the north of the Tungabhadra. The South was constantly troubled by the rivalries among the Marathas, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan of Mysore. Areas often changed hands. At the fall of Tippu in the fourth Battle of Srirangapatna in 1799 parts of the territory he had ruled over were given to the Marathas and the Nizam. Smaller principalities like Keladi, and Ikkeri knew little peace, being constantly under attack from one enemy or another. Ikkeri, in fact, was annexed by Hyder Ali in 1762. He took over Chitradurga also in 1779. Hyder also attacked Kodagu. There was friction between the land-hungry British and the rulers of Kodagu also, and the small state came under direct British administration in 1834. Whatever remained of Tippu's Mysore after the Marathas, the Nizam and the British had grabbed what they could was handed over to the old royal family, but in 1831 the British took over the administration on the pretext that Mummadi Krishnaraja had mismanaged the affairs of the state. It was only in 1881 that Chamaraja Wodeyar was installed in the throne, and the palace was able to play a dynamic role in the cultural and literary revival in Karnataka.

It is easy to imagine how unsettled conditions of life must have become, when the different powers, big and small, were engaged in constant warfare. Any

city or area might be attacked at any time, it might fall into the hands of the enemies, and be subjected to the brutalities of an intoxicated army. Every able-bodied man had to be as ready to fight as to toil in the field or elsewhere. The fate of the crops was in the laps of the gods not only because of the whimsical monsoons but also because of the ever-present shadow of attacks. In several parts of Karnataka there was insecurity, and lawless elements were on the prowl. We have it on the authority of Lord Wellesley that harvesting could be done only under military protection.

Kannada Literature had in no small measure derived inspiration from religion. The Vacahnakaras and the Haridasas had aimed at spreading the message of their religion. The defeat of the Vijayanagara Empire at Rakkasatangadi in 1565 was a crippling blow to Hinduism. Islam gained ground. Later Christianity came to the South in a big way, as the British extended their territories. Christian missions opened educational institutions and hospitals. Hindu society came under the influence of western culture and also was exposed to the challenge of new ideas and approaches. No Rajaram Mohan Roy appeared here to attempt the task of reformation and synthesis.

The champu, shatpadi, sangathya and tripadi traditions were past their prime. Great masters had

appeared and unfolded the realized potentialities of each form. The Vachana and the Keerthana were also on the decline. The old vrithas derived from Sanskrit poetry were occasionally used by poets in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Most important of all, the ways of life were undergoing revolutionary changes. The conquest of Karnataka by the British, of course, meant slavery. But it also meant contact with modern science and technology. It meant contact with people belonging to a virile and confident society. It meant contact with people who were evidently successful, who provoked envy by their success and mastery, and who had entirely different values and ways of life, who knew nothing, for example, of karma or untouchability. They were people who cared so very much for the life here and who had proved superior in military strength and in diplomacy. Life was changing fast, and new sensibilities were being shaped.

Change manifested itself in several forms. What was going on outside Karnataka in India could not but influence life and ways of thinking in Karnataka. After the convulsion of 1857 peace and stability reigned in the country. Bombay, Calcutta and Madras Universities came into being. (The first university in a native state was Mysore University, set up in 1916, when M. Visvesvarayya was the Dewan). The

Maharani's College for girls was set up in Mysore in 1901. The railway came to India in 1853 when the 21-kilometre line between Bombay and Kalyan was completed. A little later, during the regime of Sir Mark Cubbon (1834-61) the first railway line in Mysore between Bangalore and Jalarpet was laid. The Bangalore-Mysore line was laid in 1882. It is said that during the tenure of Cubbon new roads measuring 1600 miles in length were completed. Mangalore was connected with Madras by railway in 1907. In 1898 a car was imported into India for the first time. By 1881 there were 2000 primary schools in Mysore State and about 600 in Bombay Karnataka. Mummadi Krishnaraja set up the first English-teaching school in his state in 1833; he was also responsible for establishing the first government hospital. A government college was started in Bangalore in 1864 (the present Central College) and another came up in Mangalore in 1869. Printing seems to have come to Karnataka in 1817. The first newspaper in Kannada *Mangaluru Samachara*, brought out its first issue in 1843. This was followed by *Subhuddi Prakasha*, *Karnatika Prakashika* and *Arunodya* in the next twenty years.

Economic life, too, was undergoing striking changes. A dam came up at Sagarakatte to help irrigation, during the time of Dewan Purnayya (1799-1811). District Savings Banks appeared in 1870. Gold

mining began in Kolar Gold Fields in the 1880s. Government opened new departments in Old Mysore like the Department of Geology (1894) and the Department of Agriculture (1898). The Vanivilasa Sagara Irrigation Scheme materialized. The Shivanasamudra Hydro-Electric Project, the first of its kind in India, started supplying power to the Kolar Gold Fields in 1902 and to Bangalore in 1905. Spinning mills and tile factories came up in Bombay and Madras Karnataka areas. Gold mining started in Hatti (Raichur District) in 1886.

Hindu society was in a ferment. The aggressive criticism and at times ridicule which the Christian missionaries mounted as well as the influence of western education led to introspection and the desire to rid Hindu society of its ills. Raja Ram Mohan Roy did pioneering work in Bengal. Reformers like Dayananda Saraswathi (1825-1883) exercised a salutary effect on the Hindu Society. Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his great disciple Vivekananda came to be revered all over the country. Vivekananda visited Old Mysore State and was received with the utmost respect. The Theosophical Society started work in Mysore State in 1886; the Brahma Samaj opened a branch in Mangalore in 1887. Kudmal Ranga Rao did yeoman work for the Harijans in South Kannada District and the Depressed Classes Union came into being in Mangalore in 1887. Mysore State banned

the marriage of girls under ten, in 1894. The Ramakrishna Mission started its work in Bangalore in 1901.

So there was a stir in the country and change was in the very air. The old values were being questioned, the new values met with stiff opposition, and this probably accounts for the absence of literature worth the name in this period. Had a genius of the order of Vyasa or Shakespeare or Aeschylus or Kumaravyasa appeared at this stage it is conceivable that mighty works would have been composed. But those content to set forth traditional values could do little in this period of unrest and ferment.

BOOK III — THE MODERN PERIOD

CHAPTER IX — The Irrigating Springs and the First Hopeful Signs.

In the quarter of a century from 1920 Kannada reaped a rich harvest; the preparations for it had taken half a century.

We saw in the previous chapter how society was changing fast. Most of these changes affected not only people's way of life but also their way of looking at life, their expectations of life here on earth and their values. And these, in turn, shaped a new literature.

First of all must be mentioned the influence of the new schools and colleges. Students studied English, and the western system of education struck root here. This meant entering a new world. Democratic values dawned with irresistible splendour. The history of the fight of the people of England for their rights (the study of British History was compulsory in high schools) and doctrines such as 'No taxation without representation' practically bestowed new spectacles with which to look on life. Ideals of

freedom, equality, brotherhood and service thrilled young minds. The Englishman's pride in his country and its culture turned the minds of scholars and youths towards their own intellectual and cultural inheritance. Vivekananda, Dayananada Saraswathi and a host of scholars reinterpreted the Scriptures and the Bhagavadgeeta. The occidental scholar aided this process of rediscovery. Elphinstone, Vincent Smith and other historians brought to the study of the history of India a spirit unknown to the Indian, and opened his eyes to the glory that was India. In 1783 Charles Wilkins translated the Geeta into English, and it has been said that by 1850 at least 2500 books in Indian languages had been translated into English and other European languages.* Works like *The Cambridge History of India* and Max Muller's *Sacred Books of the East* both kindled pride in the hearts of enslaved Indians and taught them a new approach to the study of the past. The study of English Literature was an invigorating experience. (It must be remembered that in those days the English syllabus for even science students at the degree level was unnerving from modern standards and included Chaucer and a couple of books from *Paradise Lost*.) The Indian student inherited the entire wealth of English Literature from Chaucer through Shakespeare

*Hattombathane Shatamanadalli Paschatya Vidwamsara Seve
I.M. Muthanna.

an Untouchable?) without the initial rhyme of the second syllable. A born poet was revealed in Panje Mangesha Rao (1884-1937) whose *Tenkara Galiyata* and *Nagara Hawn* definitely belong to the new age. He was also one of the first writers of the short story. A work of considerable importance is Muddana's *Ramashwamedha* (1898). Muddana was the pen name of Nandalike Lakshminaranappa (1870-1901), an unfortunate physical culture instructor, who employed the Kannada of an earlier age and pretended that the author of the work was a court poet of a bygone age. The work narrates the story of Sri Rama's repudiation of Seeta and the fight between him and his sons, Lava and Kusha. Muddana gave the story a unique frame. The story is supposed to be narrated by the poet to his wife, Manorame. The happy love of the humble poet and his wife over-arches the tragic story of the great Emperor and his wife. M. N. Kamath and Kerur Vasudevacharya published sketches and tales which drew their material from the lives of the people around them. B. Venkatacharya translated Bankimchandra's *Durgesha Nandini* in 1885. Gulvadi Venkata Rao's *Indira* (1899) was the first independent social novel in Kannada. Humour entered the world of the novel through Babu Rao's *Vagdevi*, a work which also reveals interest in human nature. *Madiddunno Maharaya* by M. S. Puttanna (1854-1930) appeared in 1915. Here is a full-fledged novel, despite the didactic purpose of the novelist.

It presents the spectacle of the conflict between good and evil. There is also interest in human nature. The novelist can employ humour to reinforce his serious purpose. The novel presents vividly and concretely the world in which the action takes place - particularly rural life in the days of Mummadi Krishnaraja.

The period 1870-1920 witnessed conscious and concerted efforts to improve the stature of Kannada in different parts of Karnataka and to enrich Kannada Literature. The position of Kannada in Bombay Karnataka was pathetic; Marathi was all in all in that area. The efforts of devoted stalwarts like Shantakavi Mudaveedu Krishna Rao, Deputy Channabasappa and Venkata Rango Katti kindled the pride of their language in the Kannadigas and also wrung from the administration of the day several measures for the establishment of Kannada schools and the recognition of the importance of Kannada. The Karnataka Vidyavardhaka Sangha came into existence in 1890. In Mysore State luckily the royal family itself was interested in the development of Kannada and Kannada Literature. A dramatic troupe, Sri Chamarajendra Karnataka Nataka Sabha, started organizing performances of plays, with the blessings of the ruler Chamaraja Wodeyar, in the palace and for the public. Thanks to the encouragement extended by the ruler a number of plays were translated from Sanskrit and English. The Kannada Sahitya Parishat

was formed in Bangalore in 1915, once again with munificent patronage from the royal family.

A few words must be said about the role of newspapers and periodicals. These helped take literary writing to the common man. Periodicals like *Karnataka Granthamale* (1893), *Vagbhushana* (1896), *Suvasini* (1900), *Subhodini* (1905) and *Sri Krishna Sukti* (1905) provided the early writers with opportunities of publication, and also acted as bridges between the writer and the reader.

As we have already seen, quite a number of literary works appeared in this period as harbingers of the Age of the Renaissance, an Age of Richness and Splendour. Translators like S G Narasimahchar and Hattangadi Narayana Rao had experimented in metre and diction. Panje Mangesha Rao and Govinda Pai went beyond experimentation and produced genuine poetry. Muddana's *Ramashwamedha* heralded a new spirit. Galaganatha and B. Venkatachar translated novels from Marathi and Bengali. *Madiddunno Ma'araya* was a full-fledged novel. M. S. Puttanna's *Kunigal Rama Sastry* (1910) was probably the first biography in Kannada; it was also a work of literature. The tentative efforts to write short stories appeared in periodicals in the early years of this century. The stories of Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, the Father of the Short Story, began appearing in the second decade. *Iggappa Heggade Vivaha*

Prahasana by Karki Venkataramana Sastry (1887) is the first social play in Kannada and exposes the evil of 'kanyashulka' (payment of money for the bride, virtually selling a bride).

In 1911 there was an event of symbolic significance. Professor B. M. Srikantia, Professor of English in Mysore University, spoke in Dharwada, under the auspices of the Vidyavardhaka Sangh; the subject was: The Revitalization of Kannada. Both Acharya 'Sri' and the Vidyavardhaka Sangha were to play memorable roles in the decades to come.

and the Romantic poets to Charles Dickens, and also gained the key to unlock the treasures of European Literatures. He became acquainted with new literary forms and with an entirely different approach to literature. Also, the spirit of freedom and equality which suuced the writings of poets like Shakespeare, Milton, Burns and Shelley could not but challenge his own assumptions and values. It also provided an impulse for the conscious attempt to raise his own language and literature to the level of English and its literature.

The work of Christian Missionaries gave an impetus to the study of history, language and literature. Their object, of course, was to spread Christianity. But the very mission of proselytizing made it necessary for them to study the language, the beliefs and even the myths of this land. They brought printing, they started newspapers. Kerry, Maccerrel and Hudson produced grammars. We owe an excellent Kannada - English Dictionary (1894) to Ferdinand Kittel. E. P. Rice's *A Histroy of Kanarese Literature* was published in 1915. Lewis Rice brought out several volumes of the *Epigraphia Carnatica*. The contribution of Lewis Rice and Fleet to the study of the history of Karnataka has earned the deep gratitude of Kannadigas. And, it was not only the wealth of information which the missionaries unearthed that was important. The spirit of dedication and patient enquiry and the process of sifting the

evidence which Kannadiga researchers learnt from them proved invaluable. Fleet trained R. Narasimhachar who became one of the leading archacologists in this part of the country. He (Fleet) also collected folk songs.

The mention of Fleet's interest reminds us of another source of inspiration in the years of preparation. Kittel's dictionary offered not only an aid to the students of English and Kannada but contained several sources of interest. One of these was the string of proverbs which it made available. Writers like Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar and Betageri Krishna Sharma grew up in the rural atmosphere and, as boys, listened to folk songs and witnessed performances of the folk theatre. Bendre's poetry draws on folk poetry for its vocabulary, rhythms and tunes.

The nationalist movement which gained momentum in the early decades of the twentieth century naturally created a climate in which literature in Indian languages could develop; it also influenced the values implicit in this literature. 1881 saw the birth of Balagangadhara Tilak's *Kesari*. Sri Aurobindo's revolutionary career belongs to the first decade of the twentieth century. Bengali Literature brought the nationalist spirit closer through the works of Bankim Chandra. *Durgesha Nandini* was rendered into Kannada as early as in 1885.

A few words must be said about the role of the royal family in the Renaissance. Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, as we have seen, was himself a writer; he was also a patron of literature, music and the fine arts. Chamaraja Wodeyar who succeeded him was particularly interested in drama and music. In a period when educated Kannadigas were too snobbish to speak in Kannada the patronage extended by the ruler himself was a great source of strength.

The half century from 1870 gave ample evidence of the new sensibilities seeking new forms of expression. There was, it is true, a hint even earlier. Thus, for example, Kempunarayana's *Mudramanjusha* appeared in 1823. The writer enjoyed the patronage of Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar. The Sanskrit play, *Mudrarakshasa*, by Vishakhadatta, has served as the original of this prose tale. Some critics regard this work as the harbinger of the Kannada Novel. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was rendered into Kannada in 1857. But a clear indication of a new creative spirit at work is seen only in 1870 and the years following. Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* was first translated into Kannada by Churamuri Seshagiri Rao that year; Basavappa Sastry's wellknown translation followed in 1883. Scholars like Nanjangud Subba Sastry, Ananathanarayana Sastry and Narahari Jayarayacharya rendered a number of Sanskrit works into Kannada. G. M. Thuramari's *Shabda Manjari* (1869) was a new kind of work and

this dictionary proved to be of immense help to students of earlier poets. Translations from English appeared in this period in large numbers. Several plays of Shakespeare appeared in Kannada—some as translations and some as adaptations. Some poems were also translated.

In these translations from English to Kannada it is clear that the translators were facing several problems. Sometimes they were conscious of them and tried to solve them, sometimes they did not realize what they were up against. It was not merely a question of rendering into Kannada works which pleased the translators in English. The sensibilities which found expression in these works from Shakespeare to Tennyson were different from those which had found expression in Sanskrit and Kannada Literatures. English Literature was secular, highly experimental, and closer to the life of the common man. Sanskrit and Kannada Literatures had nothing like the range of humour and satire in English, and they had more or less eschewed tragedy. Not all the translators recognized the nature of the relationship between sensibility, language and form.

In 1911 Manjeshwara Govinda Pai (1883-1963) took a step which then evoked considerable opposition, but which proved a step in the right direction. He wrote a poem entitled *Holeyana Yaru?* (Who is

new writers made deliberate choices in the matter of language. The poet was now regarded as a man speaking to his fellowmen, and, while his flights of the imagination and his vision might distinguish him from others, his language had to be adequate both to embody his experience and to communicate it to his fellowmen. Also, the interest in the novel, the short story, the essay and biography meant the development of prose.

It would be wrong to conclude, from what has been said, that Navodaya Literature was derivative or imitative. While it was profoundly influenced by English Literature, it retained the spirit of Indian thought and culture. Except in the writings of a few like Betagari Krishna Sharma and Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar, the struggle for freedom did not directly come into this literature in a big way. But national pride was awakened: Vivekananda, Tilak, Annie Besant, Gandhiji - all had turned to the Upanishads and other religious writings of ancient India; the West itself had come to recognize the glory of these sacred texts. Indian thought had never suggested an Original Sin. Individually a Vachanakara or a Haridasa might catalogue his sins and seek the mercy of the Lord: but life was also 'ananda' and men were 'amruthasya putraha'. This vision also deeply influenced the literature of this age.

Poetics had developed in India but not applied criticism. These writers had also to be interpreters and critics. Moreover, they had absorbed much from Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Matthew Arnold and Bradley. This was the age of stimulating literary criticism, too.

The nativisation of the western inspiration did not take long, either for the creative writer or for the critic. The first stories of Masti, the first poem of Bendre and the first important novel of Shivaram Karanth show how completely the Kannada writer had assimilated the western influence and yet remained both Indian and himself.

The Navodaya writers did not regard themselves as belonging to a single school; they used no label. And, while we recognize the emergence of other movements in subsequent stages, it is necessary to remember that Navodaya Literature is no longer a thing of the past.

B M Sri's *English Geethagalu* appeared in 1921; and the literature of the next twenty-five years was rich both in volume and in excellence.

It was fortunate that, in this period of tremendous enthusiasm and confidence, Karnataka had the talent to match.

Poetry

Navodaya poetry was mainly lyrical and the poets experimented with the sonnet, the ode and the elegy; verse narrative also appeared in this age, and the blank verse was forged as a vehicle of narration.

While this poetry was influenced by the conception of the function of poetry as sweet persuasiveness ('kantha sammitta') it was also influenced by the Romantic conception of the poet's relationship to the community, and the faith in the supremacy of the Imagination. The Romantic poet had a vision to embody in his poetry - a unique vision which revealed the essential oneness of all creation. (Another way of looking at poetry is summed up in Pope's description of art as "What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed".) He believed in the liberating power of the Imagination. The recognition of the essential unity of all creation also meant a new kinship with Nature. Two immensely popular poems of Bendre and Kuvempu, for example, express two allied responses to Nature. In '*Belagu*' Bendre moves from a description of the sunrise to a thrilled vision ('Idu bari belagallo anna' - This is not just a morning, brother); in '*Doni Hadu*' Kuvempu moves from a description of the early morning to a way of accepting life ('Navu leclamathra jeevaru'). Like Wordsworth these poets recognize beauty and joy in

widest commonalty spread. Not that they did not recognize the presence of evil in creation or that they were blind to 'what man has done to man'. Bendre's *Kurudu Kanchana* must be one of the most terrifying pictures of exploitation drawn in any language. But there is a joyous acceptance of earthly existence because of the loveliness in creation and the beauty and joy of loyal human relations. There is also faith in the goodness and nobility of human nature — embodied in poems like Masti's *Gowdara Malli*. Conjugal love, maternal love, friendship, the spell of nature — all these were themes of splendid lyrics. Sri composed odes characterized by classical gravity, and dignity and compactness of expression. The dawn of freedom was celebrated in odes by D. V. Gundappa and Kuvempu. The old metres ('vrithas') were not altogether abandoned; but daring innovation and experimentation shaped new verse forms.

Masti Venkatesha Iyengar (b 1891) led the way in many ways. In a way he continued the tradition of the Haridasas. At the same time he experimented with narrative verse and the sonnet. He was one of the first poets to employ blank verse — and that with remarkable success. His *Navarathri* deserves particular mention. It is a collection of nineteen stories in verse, with a frame into which they are fitted. It is the composition of a spirit endowed with

CHAPTER X — Navodaya

B. M. Srikantia's *English Geethagalu* — a collection of translations and adaptations of English poems—appeared in 1921. (The 1924 edition had 24 poems, the '26 edition had 65.) This is generally regarded as announcing the birth of the New Age. But it must be recognized that actually there were three groups engaged in innovations. First of all, of course, there was the group in Mysore State, inspired by Srikantia. Not all the translations in his collection were equally successful. But what was important was the expression in poetry of a new spirit—a spirit of interest in life here on the earth, of joy in Nature, of respect for the life of the simple and the humble folk inspired by a recognition of the dignity of man as man. By temperament Srikantia (1884–1944) leaned to classicism; his own poetry is splendidly classical. But he was a fervent admirer of Shakespeare and the Romantics, and their influence is clear in the *Geethagalu*. His metrical experiments were both daring and sensitive, guided by a genuine poet's sensibilities. As I have said elsewhere, *English Geethagalu* was thrillingly fresh in its response to life and to Nature. Here was a joyous realization of kinship with Nature in

wonder and delight, combined with seriousness in the poet's response to the mosaic of sorrow and joy in human life. This collection came as an adventure in aesthetic experience to the readers and made a strong impact on a number of young writers. The moment had found its man in Professor Srikantia.

About the time *English Geethagalu* appeared Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre's *Krishnakumari* also appeared. Bendre and some of his friends had formed the Geleyara Balaga in Dharwar (in North Karnataka). He drew inspiration from folk poetry, and, while B. M. Srikantiah solved the problem of literary language by using the standard Kannada of the educated middle classes of Mysore State in his poetry and old Kannada in his tragedies, Bendre went to folk poetry and the virile Dharwad dialect for his sources. It need hardly be pointed out that this also meant that, while both writers in Mysore State and in North Karnataka were responding to the same stimulus, and had many things in common, their sensibilities were not identical. By and large, classical restraint marked the literary compositions in Mysore, greater lyricism and idealism those in North Karnataka.

While no literary figure with the stature of a B. M. S. or Masti Venkatesha Iyengar or Bendre appeared for a while in South Kanara (Dakshina Kannada), Panje Mangesha Rao and Govinda Pai were the centre of

considerable literary activity. Govinda Pai was a giant of a scholar (he knew more than twenty languages and was engaged in research) and wrote lyrics and verse drama.

So the resurgent literary spirit of Kannada manifested itself in the second decade of the twentieth century in different parts of Karnataka. Experimentation was in the very air, and, while the writers were proud of their mighty predecessors like Pampa, Ranna, Kumaravyasa and Harihara, they borrowed new literary forms from the west, and made them their own. The lyric was no longer the vehicle of religious devotion alone; its range expanded miraculously. The sonnet, the ode, the elegy—all appeared in Kannada. The short story shaped into a literary form. The novel came to Kannada through English, Bengali and Marathi Literatures, but soon reaped a magnificent harvest. The personal essay and biography were transplanted. Tragedy, comedy and the one-act play drew some writers. Wordsworth's pronouncements on poetry and poetic diction, Matthew Arnold's solemn and reverential approach to poetry, Bradley's interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedies—all made an impact both on the writer and on the reader. By about 1935 Renaissance Literature had blossomed in glory, and acquired its distinctive characteristics.

What are these characteristics? We have already noticed the zest for experiments. But this zest was itself the sign of a new spirit. This literature was man-centred. The humanistic spirit of English Literature influenced it. Life here was no illusion, not something to be suffered as inevitable, not just a passage to a better world hereafter, but good in itself. Secondly, this literature was democratic. It recognized the dignity of man as man, the essential equality of all men and the importance of every man and woman. From these it follows that it was secular. Literature was no longer the means of disseminating the tenets of religion. It also ceased to be didactic. But it was religious in its solemn acceptance of life as a responsibility. Literature used to be about gods and goddesses, and saints and the great ones. Now, literature was concerned with the passions and dreams and fortunes of all men and women. And, under the influence particularly of Wordsworth, it turned to the humblest and the presumably uncorrupted humble folk. The influence of Wordsworth on one side and of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda and others, on the other hand, led to interest in mystic experience and spiritual evolution. Literature also became interested in human nature—its mystery and variety and oddities. Indian poets had responded to the beauty and majesty of Nature. But the study of English Romantic poets led to a recognition of kinship with Nature. As we have already seen, the

a rich sense of humour. There is depth of feeling without turbulence, and acceptance of life without facile optimism.

Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre (1896 - 1981) shot into fame with the recitation of his magnificent poem *Hakki Haaruthide Nodidira?* (Did You See the Bird on its Flight?) at the Belgaum Kannada Literary Conference in 1929. Soon he emerged as a poet commanding phenomenal popularity, to which his unique and energetic recitation of his poems and the amazing gifts he brought to the public platform contributed not a little. He was a fascinating man with an extraordinarily lively mind which sent forth flashes continually. He was one of the great poets of India. In 1974 he received the Bharatiya Jnanapith Award.

The word most often used in Kannada to describe Bendre is 'gaarudi' (a wizard). His wizardry in the use of language was what struck the reader first. The words danced, they sparkled, they set up enchanting rhythms; they divided themselves in new ways or formed new combinations to carry, or, at times, to hurl, the reader to new planes. But this matchless master of language was all the while trying to gain fresh insights into life; he had a Gargantuan appetite for experience, and bright and probing insights to explore and assess it. From the ecstasy of fulfilled love, the joys of motherhood, the pain of misunder-

standing in married life and the anguish of parents watching a child at death's door, to the tearing pangs of starvation and the apprehensive yet enchanted response to mystic spiritual awakening, the range of experience that is incarnated in his poetry is amazing. The assimilating energy of his poetry, the fusion of thought and feeling and of sensory and mundane experience with a vision of a cosmic energy permeating all universe, the unique gift for creating symbols, the exploitation of all the resources of the language, and the superb mastery of rhythm and metre – all these have made him one of the great poets of India in the twentieth century. He is a mystic who, with a single line, can transport the reader to a world beyond the tangible world; he is often a spirit, a soul, in a vast, splendid and mysterious universe. (Yet few have sung the joys of wedded life as ecstatically as he; few have distilled into language the despair and the hunger of the orphaned millions as he.) He can communicate to us a sense of being greater than we know. The cosmic background does not dwarf man in his poetry, but sets him apart as one in kinship with the gods.

K. V. Puttappa (Kuvempu) (b. 1904) won the Jnanpith Award earlier, in 1969. The modern age is supposed to be inimical to epic poetry. And yet he gave the age an epic, *Sree Ramayana Darshanam*. The work took nine years to complete. It comprises 22,284 lines, and is divided into more than 50 cantos.

As the title implies, the work narrates the story of Sri Rama; it embodies also a vision of man's development. Kuvempu departs from Valmiki's story in significant ways. Ravana's Lanka is the home of a splendid civilization; he himself makes up his mind to restore Seeta to Rama, after overcoming him on the battlefield. It is even suggested that later he is to be born as Rama's son. When Seeta enters the fire to prove her chastity, Rama, too, follows her. Manthara is humanised. There is no burning of Lanka.

In the opening lines of the poem the poet pays homage to the great poets of the world in many ages, climes and languages, and so places himself in the epic tradition of the world. As he has said, here is a poem which offers poetry to those who seek poetry, a story to those who want a story and a vision to those who seek a vision. The poem is a vision of the evolution of a perfect human personality. Rama is not just the incarnation of Mahavishnu, but evolves. Here is a vision of the pilgrimage of the human soul. Ravana himself sheds his 'Ravanathva' (that which makes him Ravana) and attains 'Ramathva'. The poem brings into its ken the common man as no other epic does. The poet has described his variation of the blank verse as 'mahachandas'. He had long experimented with blank verse, and here he breaks the traditional foot violating the old 'yathi-bhanga' rule. The language is stately, and Kuvempu's

gift for coining new expressions finds scope here. (In the opinion of the present writer) a flaw in the poem is that Evil gets softened and we never experience it in all its ferocity and tenacity. Also, the verse is stiff in places and the flight unintendedly uneven. But, with all this, *Ramayana Darshanam* is an outstanding achievement.

This epic was the culmination of Kuvempu's career. He began with lyrics and narrative poetry, as well as patriotic songs. He comes from the malnad, the region where Nature is to be seen in all her might and majesty. He is often a child in the lap of mother Nature. But he can also visualize a grim conflict between man and Nature, when Nature yields nothing out of affection or compassion, and man has to wrest everything by dour struggle. Kuvempu has also been the conscience of the community, and raised his voice for the poor, the dumb and the downtrodden. He is capable of packing a thought into a few words (e. g. 'Friends, speech is pollution here, be silent') but at times the heavy Sanskritization of his diction becomes puzzling.

The Navodaya Age produced quite a number of poets of note. P T Narasimhachar (b.1905) brings to us the sheer joy of living. There is a sparkling intellectual vivacity at times in his poetry. His poems on Yadugiri capture the different moods and the many-faceted loveliness of the sacred place. Pu. Ti. Na.

(as he is affectionately called) sees in earthly life the eternal sport of a Power in love with loveliness. What limits the appeal and the achievement of this poet is an unevenness - sometimes culminating in uncouthness - of diction. But it is a lively intellect combined with a passionate love of this life. Another poet who won wide popularity was V. Seetharamaiah (b.1899) with a wider range of intellectual interests and a more insistently questioning spirit than most of his contemporaries. Vi. Sec. shows an agonized awareness of the forces of injustice and exploitation around him, combined with a love of all that is beautiful and refined. A poem like *Gadi Datuvudu* shows a remarkable structure. Vinayaka Krishna Gokak (b.1909) brought the sea into modern Kannada poetry. His use of myth is creative. He has also written a remarkable modern champu, *Indilla Naale*. He shows a sharp awareness of the problems posed by the scientific and technological advance in the modern world.* *Mysuru Mallige* of K S Narasimhaswamy (b.1915) of has seen more editions than any other collection of poems. The popularity is richly deserved. The poems create a world of tender conjugal love and devotion. Narasimhaswamy has revealed a remarkable development in his poetry. He has retained his gift for drawing fresh and vivid verbal pictures. But he has gained in complexity and depth. In his

Dr. Gokak's epic, *Bharatha Sindhu Rashmi*, has just been published,

latest collection, *Tereda Baagilu*, in technique he returns to his earlier narration centering around one incident, but a quiet, mature response to life controls the narration.

The vachana has continued to attract writers. It is a unique form with advantages which no other form offers. So reflective writers have turned to it again and again. S V Ranganna's *Rangayyana Vachanagalu* and Siddaiah Puranika's *Vachanodyana* may be mentioned as outstanding instances. Ranganna's work is uneven, but shows a kindly, introspective mind with a fine sense of proportion, moving on the twin rails of scholarship and assessment. *Vachanodyana* is an excellent instance of a work written within a tradition enriching it; it combines contemporary awareness with a vision of abiding values.

There are quite a number of poets who made noteworthy contributions to the poetry of the Navodaya Age - like Santakavi, D S Karki, Kadangodlu Shankara Bhatta, T N Srikantiah, R S Mugali, S V Parameshwara Bhatta, Madhura Chenna, Kaiyyarakiyyannarai, B H Sridhara, Siddaiah Puranika ('Kaavyananda'), S R Ekkundi, Anandakanda and M V Sectharamaiah ('Raghava'). Limitations of space alone forbid a detailed examination of their poetry.

It is, however, necessary to mention a few works which claim attention for particular reasons. D. V.

Gundappa (1889-1975) was a remarkable personality in many ways - and a man of many achievements. His poetry shows variety, love of beauty and a probing spirit. Of particular interest is *Mankuthimmana Kagga* (The Rigmarole of the Dullard Thimma). This is a string of musings on several aspects and problems of life, musings characterized by a liberal approach, an unfailing awareness of man's existence in Time and Space, an appreciation of man's potentialities and sympathy for man's limitations. It has been objected that what we get here is the word of Ripeness, without the process of ripening and without exposure to the challenges of the realities of life. But one might retort that each set of stanzas creates its own context. Many who care little for poetry have found much to console and guide in this work, and a large circle of readers has cherished it. Masti's *Sri Rama Pattabhisheka* narrates the story of Rama up to his coronation, but the technique is both novel and meaningful. The story begins when Sri Rama is expected after his ordeals of fourteen years. So the entire story of the Ramayana is told in retrospect. The device also brings Sugreeva and his retinue to Ayodhya, and so we have both representatives of different civilizations and different minds assessing events. Masti brings a surprisingly modern mind to his work. We are in a world of true refinement, ripe wisdom and endearing graciousness. A third work which calls for comment is *Yendkduka Ratnana Padagalu* (The

Songs of Ratna) by G. P. Rajaratnam (1908-1979). These are supposed to be songs sung by a man addicted to drinking; they are in rustic dialect. At the time of its appearance it created a sensation; now the novelty has worn off. The man, Ratna, who sings these songs, is responsive to the good and beautiful things in life, and considers himself blessed in a loving wife.

A feature of Navodaya lyrics, which drew unfavourable comments from the Navyas (Modernists), deserves mention. Quite a number of them were composed to be sung, and many others were set to tunes and sung. Most of them, even if they could not actually be set to music, could be recited attractively. The Navyas complained that the musicalness sometimes concealed the feebleness of the poetry. This is true, but as true as the criticism of any support turned into a crutch. The poet has a right to exploit all the resources of his language, and there is no reason why he should not harness the phonology of the language to his purpose. Their recitability, certainly carried these compositions to audiences who, otherwise, would have remained strangers to poetry. That a resource is misused is no argument against its discreet use. The rejection of this element was an impoverishment of poetic language. Poetry and music tend to disappear from the lives of people as society gets industrialized. These poets made poetry a part of the lives of thousands,

Fiction

Many statements we may make about Navodaya literature do not apply to Shivarama Karanth (b.1902). Thus, for example, we speak of western influences; we may say that Navodaya Literature, though no longer the vehicle of religion and didacticism, still recognized spiritual evolution. Even Kuvempu who is against institutionalized religion considers spirituality important. But such generalizations do not apply to Karanth. But he is religious in a larger sense—in his affirmation of the meaningfulness of life, and his quest of values which lead to fulfilment of life. He is strictly secular, but with a genuine appreciation of the lives of those who live by the values of religion.

Karanth, therefore, betrays no influence of the western novel. *Devadootharu* (1928) was his first significant novel and during the next half a century he produced novels which made him one of the major writers of India. He was the recipient of the Jnanapith Award in 1978.

Kannada was singularly fortunate that this titan appeared so early in the history of fiction, for straight-away it developed adult interests. And to him the novel was a responsibility, a way of probing and evaluating experience. He is intensely moral without being didactic. He is singularly free from sentimentality. With enormous respect for the claims of the

heart, and with genuine tenderness and compassion, he combines a sense of proportion and a strength of mind which steer him clear of sentimentality. The process of ripening is his favourite theme. His epic-novel *Marali Mannige* explores man's relationship with Nature. His *Chomana Dudi* presents the saga of the suffering of an untouchable. *Alida Mele* marks the beginning of a series of novels of a different kind; the closed novel with the traditional plot is abandoned for an exploration of the inner self. *Alida Mele* itself is an attempt to answer the question: what remains after a man leaves this world? But it is something more; it shows the very process of a sensitive soul coming to terms with life. Karanth uses symbolism here as never before. The novel also shows the narrator himself growing. Karanth tries to telescope his vision of the evolution of human society in his *Mukajjiya Kanasugalu* (which received the Jnanapith Award). In more recent novels, Karanth's contempt for sham and selfishness revolts at the spectacle that free India presents. These are rather unsatisfactory. It is interesting to note that Karanth, who, single-handed, has produced science encyclopaedias and has written with authority on Art, has shown no interest whatever in philosophy, eastern or western. This to some extent, weakens the force of his attacks on the Indian conception of 'Avatar' or Divine Incarnation and similar conceptions. Contrary to the prevailing impression that he is indifferent to form and technique,

Karant has experimented with the novel form. He was probably the first Kannada novelist to use the first - person narration. From any standards Shivarama Karant is a major novelist. He belongs to no school, has founded none, and has not been imitated.

In North Karnataka the modern novel has a history dating from 1933. Betageri Krishna Sharma's (Ananadakanda) *Sudarshana* and V K Gokak's *Ijjodu* appeared that year. The former was the first social novel in Kannada, and also showed the influence of Gandhian ideology. The hero is a saintly young man dedicated to the service of the poor and the helpless. The latter is a domestic novel depicting the sorrows of a good girl, unfortunate in marriage.

The Kannada novelist was discovering the exhilarating potentialities of his medium. It was, in a sense, the substitute for the epic—better suited to unheroic times or, rather, the type of heroism he was unveiling. Anandakanda's *Sudarshana*, dedicated to the service of the country and its unfortunate children, was the new hero of the Gandhian Age. The novelist was also looking at his society—its values, its sources of strength, and its injustice and follies. The small man or the common man had become the subject of the novelist's study. Masti's stories about the simple youth Rangappa's marriage and his Deepavali had already appeared. The novel concerned itself, not with the

great joys and the great sorrows of Rama and Seeta, of Nala and Damayanti, but with the ordinary man and woman. A number of novels depicting the troubled course of love, or the joys and sorrows of middle class families appeared. Quite a number of them were readable and competently written. Dr. R. S. Mugali has said that between 1920 and 1945 about eighty novels were published. It is surprising how good the writing is generally. And when we recall that these novels included Masti's novella *Subbanna*, Devudu Narasimha Sastry's *Antaranga*, *Mayura* and *Mahabrahmana*, Karanth's *Marali Mannige*, *Bettada Jeeva* and *Hettala Thayi*, N. Kasturi's *Chakradrishtri* and V M Inamdar's *Eradu Dhruva*, we see that the novel had indeed taken deep root in this soil. It was a excellent most satisfying development.

Devudu Narasimha Sastry (1897 - 1962), V. M. Inamdar (b.1912) and Sriranga (Adya Rangacharya, b. 1904) were the novelists with a pronounced intellectual bias. Devudu's *Antaranga* was probably the first Kannada novel to attempt psychological studies. His three mighty novels, *Mahabrahmana*, *Mahakshatriya* and *Mahadarshana* are re-creations of the mythological ages, and Devudu's formidable erudition becomes creative here. In these novels we meet the immortals and men and women who, except that they are mortal, can match the immortals. Vishwamitra, Nahusha, Yajnavalkya, Gargi and other titans of the

mythological ages are presented convincingly, and they appear, not as fortunate beings luckily endowed with exceptional powers, but as fulfilments of human potentialities. The re-creation of the world of the mythologies, with a wealth of details and their own characteristic idiom, is an amazing achievement. *Mahakshatriya* in particular seems to me the most artistic affirmation of the greatness of man, and thus a splendid embodiment of the spirit of Navodaya Literature. If Devudu's characters are larger than life Inamdar's characters are like ourselves. He came under the influence of Galsworthy; he examines the very basis of the institutions which regulate human relations - with compassion and an awareness of the demand of sensitiveness and refinement. In *Urvashi* he probes the nature of evil; with this study he combines a vision of unattainable Beauty. It is surprising that the pressures and dehumanization of modern urban life have not claimed the attention of many novelists and short story writers. Vyasarayya Ballala's *Hemanthagana* portrays the stresses and strains which twist and bend human relations in an impersonal and exploiting environment. Sriranga the dramatist has eclipsed Sriranga the novelist. Otherwise his novels would have won better recognition. The tireless experimenter is in evidence here, too. The technique changes from novel to novel. *Purushartha* begins with a description of the funeral procession of Lokamanya Tilak on first August 1920; the action concludes on the day India attained freedom. The

reminiscences of four friends hold the mirror up to the struggle of the country in the intervening years. *Vishachakravyuha* embodies the novelist's sense of bitter disappointment and betrayal after the country became free. In *Prakriti* which traces the changing relations between the upper caste people and the Harijans, the action begins in the present, slides into the past and returns to the present.

Kuvempu, whose poetry has already claimed our attention, is the author of two remarkable novels. His *Kanuru Subbamma* is an epic-novel. The locale is a village in malnad, and the novelist, himself a child of malnad, recreates the world and the life of the region with loving elaboration and insight. Man and Nature in the malnad, the hierarchical society of the village in the last decades of the nineteenth century – these come to life in these pages. At the centre of the action is a starry-eyed youth whose mind and spirit evolve under the twin influences of Swami Vivekananda and English Literature. There may be reservations about the success of the portrait of the hero, Huvaiah. Some critics have felt that the novel fails to establish the right aesthetic distance. But there is no doubt that this novel was a landmark in an age of novels portraying the urban life of the educated middle class. Nearly two decades later, Kuvempu published another novel, *Malegalalli Madumagalu*. Kuvempu said that in this novel 'No one is important, no one unimportant

and no one trivial'. The erotic impulse at play in the malnad thrills through all life here. The greatness of the novel lies in its weaving the web of a complex life before us – a web the whole of which thrills and responds when any filament is touched.

Gokak's *Ijjodu* has already been mentioned. Over a span of years it grew into a seven-volume novel running to about 1500 pages, and now bears the title *Samarasave Jeevana* (Life is Harmony). The nucleus novel was a domestic tragedy; this the full-fledged work is a spiritual pilgrimage. The wealth of material in it is remarkable. But it is rather uneven. The idealist, the realist and the humanist are weighed in the balance. Rao Bahadur's *Gramayana* has been claimed by the Navyas as heralding their Age. But the claim is disputable. What is indisputable is that here we have a novel delineating the disintegration of a whole community and, while narrating a gripping story, revealing the Law of Cause and Effect inexorably at work. The past catches up with character after character naturally, quietly and relentlessly. The characters are remarkably alive, and the novelist allows them total freedom, so that their natures steadily unroll themselves and at the same time determine their fates. Rarely has a Kannada novel captured so clearly the interaction of individual character and the environment.

A few words must be said about one kind of the novel – the historical novel. Devudu's *Mayura* (1932)

was the first historical novel of the Navodaya Age. Since then, a number of historical novels have appeared - some of them, like K V Iyer's *Shantala* and C K Nagaraja Rao's *Pattmahadevi Shantala Devi* vividly recreating the life and society in which the action is placed. B Puttaswamaiah has written a sequence delineating the time of the great Veerashaiva Vachanakaras. The number of historical novels is considerable. It must also be conceded that in a crucial age, they revived memories of the values which Karnataka had cherished for centuries and from which it had drawn sustenance. But it is true that the society of one novel is like that of another, and the attempt is to present what are considered the abiding values of Karnataka life. From this point of view Masti's *Channabasava Nayaka* and *Chikkaveera Rajendra* are outstanding historical novels. Both study the forces of disintegration at work in two small communities and locate them in the decay of traditional institutions and the failure of individuals. The characters are individualized but at the same time we see clearly the different parts of the social machinery and their interdependence. A society is doomed when the sources of power become corrupt, and individual entrusted with responsibility fail to keep their private and public lives apart.

Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, who has just been mentioned, is the first big name in the realm of th

short story. Some of his stories could deservedly find a place in any anthology of world stories. The mellow wisdom and sense of perspective which informed the stories in his very first collection (1920) surprise us even today. His kindly humour is part of both. (But it is noteworthy that Masti never uses the favourite device of the story-teller, particularly the beginner, the surprise ending, and never uses satire.) The wisdom of the ages is distilled in his stories. Sorrow and pain he presents, and is aware that they cannot be explained; there is no facile optimism in him. But he is also aware of the equally inexplicable goodness and kindness which one meets at every turn. His stories generally have a frame; the frame distances experience and so is functional in different ways in different stories. His clear and lively Kannada which was equal to the demands of description, narration, dialogue and reflection, was an asset from the beginning. He was a master who made the short story the vehicle of a vision. It is a happy thing that he is still with us, and that he wrote stories at the age of 88.

Masti inspired a number of writers to choose the story as their medium. A. R. Krishna Sastry wrote only a few stories, but was clearly a master of the medium. His *Gurugala*. *Mahime* embodies a whole vision of life. Ananda's (Ajajampur Sitaram,) stories were immensely popular; they express emotions more

sharply, and employ the surprise ending. Ashwatha (Ashwathanarayana Rao) has the kindly humour of Masti, and can embed a scale of liberal values. Betageri Krishna Sharma, K. Goplakrishna Rao, Krishnakumara Kallur, M.V. Seetharamaiah, Venkata Rao (Bhaatipriya) and a number of others wrote interesting stories, illuminated by the liberal values which Masti's stories had embodied. Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar must be particularly mentioned for his portrayal of rural life. (He has written a number of stories on the dilemmas of urban life also.) While the narration, seemingly casual and simple, is leavened with humour, it also offers insights into the structure and pressures of rural life.

The Navodaya Fiction saw the emergence of a number of women writers. Kodagina Gowramma, Vani and other women writers belong chronologically to the first line of women writers. Triveni (her real name was Anasuya) won phenomenal popularity in the 'fifties and inspired a number of women writers. Her life was brief (1928-63) but in a span of a decade she wrote twenty novels and a number of stories. She gave expression to woman's innate desire for motherhood and for importance and satisfaction as the beloved centre of a family. She also added a dash of psychology. M. K. Indira scored a success with her first novel, *Tungabhadra* and followed

it up with good novels like '*Gejjepute*'. Quite a few women writers have achieved enviable popularity. They generally deal with problems of domestic life, and embody traditional values of affection, service and sacrifice.

Drama

The Navodaya Age saw the decline of the professional troupes. The changing conditions of life and the advent of the cinema were inimical to them. The age needed a dramatist who could write for an unsophisticated and modestly equipped — and at times even an improvised — stage and could offer opportunities to amateur talent. Fortunately not one but two such dramatists appeared — T. P. Kailasam in Mysore and Adya Rangacharya (Sriranga) in North Karnataka.

Before we turn to them we must consider some outstanding efforts. Samsa (Venkatadri Iyer : 1892-1939) was a strange phenomenon. Tormented by hallucinations which finally drove him to suicide, he seems to have destroyed the greater part of what he wrote. He created characters larger than life. In the historical plays which have survived we see an extraordinary talent at work. He chose his material from the history of Mysore, and presented absorbing action. The conflict between the forces of order and those of lawlessness is presented clearly and powerfully ; the characters, larger than life, speak archaic

Kannada which no one has used save Samsa ; but it suits the characters and helps create an old-world atmosphere in which good and evil clash. An energetic creative mind is at work here, and Samsa is inimitable.

'Sri' (B. M. Srikantiah) gave Kannada its first full-fledged tragedy. He rendered into Kannada Aeschylus *The Persae*. He carved his '*Gadayuddha Nataka*' (dealing with the last stage of Duryodhana's life) from Ranna's poem, *Sahasa Bheema Vijaya*. He wrote *Ashwathaman* (1929), modelling it on Sophocles' '*Ajax*'. It is a powerful tragedy. With these plays a new chapter opened in the history of Kannada Drama. Tragedy in the western sense appeared, and that spectacularly. The dramatist who was engaged in the dissemination and propagation of traditional values now began to ponder over the question of man's destiny in the universe and over free will and moral responsibility. Also, Sri's play showed how mythological material could be utilized to project the playwright's vision. Kuvempu in *Beral-ge-Koral* and Vi. See. in his *Agraha* followed in the footsteps of 'Sri'. Masti used historical material in *Yashodara* to give form to his vision of human greatness and a life of fulfilment. In the play Buddha represents the summit of human greatness ; in him ripe wisdom and detachment blend with compassion. His wife, Yashodhara, moves from the prison of the past to the world of

the timeless, and wins her way to peace of mind. These playwrights forged the blank verse as a matchless vehicle of reflective drama.

Significant as was the achievement of these dramatists the Kannada Theatre needed something more – plays which amateurs could present. And they had to be not just entertainment but stimulating experiences. Kailasam and Sriranga brought the theatre closer to the common man. They wrote plays which tested human worth in terms of integrity and usefulness to society; they showed up whatever was false or hypocritical in contemporary social life. The men and women who appeared on the stage in their plays seemed to have been taken from real life – the orthodox and [superstitious men and women, pretentious reformers, windbags, the loyal servant and the untouchable. The widow, whose very sight was supposed to be inauspicious in real life, appeared on the stage for the first time. The fact that the play largely depended on the energy which the playwright put into it – emotional energy in Kailasam and intellectual energy in Sriranga – attracted amateur troupes to their plays. The plays compelled the spectators to think for themselves, and to investigate traditional institutions and accepted values.

These two dramatists were not interested in individuality. Their characters are largely types. This was

natural because both were examining the contemporary society under the microscope of the dramatist's genius.

Kailasam is generally regarded as a satirist but his satire is impelled by tenderness. He recognizes goodness and the spirit of service and sacrifice, and where he finds them he is tender and respectful. The constant theme of his plays is sound worth vs. hollowness. (The title of his first play is *Tollu - Gatti*, Hollow and Substantial). He attacks all that poisons or warps natural, tender and enriching human relations. He made scathing attacks on the dowry system, on snobbery, on pretensions of social service, and on showy modernism. The widow in the Hindu family seemed to him the embodiment of patient suffering and sacrifice, and motherhood the most sacred thing on the earth. In many ways Kailasam is for all his satire and progressive outlook, a conservative. But he is always on the side of goodness, self-sacrifice and modesty: he denounces all that arrests the free flow of goodness and the natural affections. Tender humour, slapdash humour, wit, irony, satire, farce, the pun - all exist side by side in his work. He could write a perfectly constructed farce like *Vaidyana Vyadhi*. He had perfect control over the pace of the dialogue. But at times he is too loud. Unfortunately he used what he called Kannadanglo - Kannada with a generous mixture of

English words, the sort of language that educated middle class in Old Mysore used. This has dated his plays, and they are mostly neglected now. His mythological plays merit study. In *Ekalavya* he presents a very interesting study of Sri Krishna. The tragedy lies there in the inevitability of the sacrifice of goodness by a power partial to goodness.

Sriranga's career as a dramatist spans nearly six decades. He has attained all India stature. Plays like *Kelu Janamejaya* (Listen Janamejaya) have been translated into other Indian languages. Man in society was his subject to begin with; mankind has become his subject in later plays. He saw selfishness, ignorance and superstitions poisoning human relations at home and in society, in plays like *Harijanvara* and *Samsara Panipathu*; in later plays he sees ignorance leading to the destruction of mankind itself. In his later plays, more than the play of individual traits he is interested in the ways of life, so much so his characters have no names but are called Samanyappa (the common man), Yuvathi (a young lady) and Muduka (an old man). Sriranga's satire is sharp and stinging. He is more intellectual than Kailasam and his range is wider. Thus, for example he looks at the history of Free India and of mankind itself through the clear eyes of satire. He presents the clash of ideas and suggests startlingly new ways of looking at contemporary society. As a playwright he

has been constantly experimenting with his medium and the use of language. Sometimes a Sriranga play leaves the spectators bewildered. There is not, in his plays, the tenderness which exists side by side with satire in a Kailasam's play. His plays often sound pessimistic and the major characters do not seem to face life and take decisions and act. There are penetrating comments about contemporary life but little active participation. *Kattale - Belaku* is not a typical Sriranga play, but one of the most remarkable compositions in modern Kannada Drama.

Parvathavani (P. Narasinga Rao b.1913) was the able successor to Kailasam. Like him he uses colloquial Kannada, and like him he is mainly concerned with the life of the middle class. His plays have the same emotional energy as Kailasam's. His dialogues are racy, and he lays his knowledge of mythology and literature under contribution to light up the dialogue. He has also dealt with contemporary issues. He has brought English, French and Russian dramatists in perfect Kannada garbs to the Kannada Theatre. Another dramatist of note is G B Joshi. His plays are few in number but stand out by their presentation of human relations and the ideals and values which shape them. While Kailasam and Sriranga were engaged in a satirical portrayal of the follies of contemporary society Joshi turned to tender human relations and joys and sorrows of life, as well as to

the challenges to goodness and idealism in an insensitive and self-seeking world.

The opera attracted some playwrights, chief among them P. T. Narasimhachar. His *Gokula Nirgamana* (which presents the life of Krishna in Gokula before his departure to Mathura at the invitation of Kamsa) creates a world of joy and innocence trembling on the verge of harshness and evil, an island of loveliness and love surrounded by a threatening sea of arrogance and selfishness. Music plays a large part in his tragedy *Ahalye* and in several plays of Shivarama Karanth.

Prose

One of the best things which happened in the Navodaya Age was the development of prose. Modern life and education made the use of prose for a variety of purposes inevitable. As the old ways and institutions of administration gave way to new ones and the relations between the administration and the people changed, even the common man had to adopt himself to the new times. The new system of education also made the extensive use of Kannada for instruction and the preparation of texts necessary. The growth of journalism called for exposition and argument and persuasion in new areas. The national upsurge turned the minds of both writers and readers to the lives

of the great sons, and daughters of the land. The struggle for freedom meant a greater direct contact between the leaders and the masses (particularly in a country where hardly ten per cent were literate). All this led to the widening of the range of prose, conscious and deliberate effort to develop it and exploitation of its resources.

The Essay flowered in a short time. Probably the first collection of essays was *Loka Rahasya* (1898) - a Kannada translation of Bankimchandra's Bengali essays. This new form permitted the writer to share his whims and fancies, his conjectures and convictions, with the reader in an informal and chatty manner and therefore attracted a number of writers. Some of the finest minds and best creative talent employed this form. The great master of the form is A N Moorthy Rao. Some of his essays could find a place in a world anthology of essays. He shows a ripeness of wisdom, a sympathy for the foibles and follies of men, a sweet reasonableness combined with a recognition of the claims of the heart, a refined sense of humour which enables him to laugh at himself as he laughs at others, and a sense of the beauty and goodness in the world, which make his essays a treasury of sweetness and light. His style has flexibility, lightness of touch, precision and warmth. N. Kasturi, Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar and R. Shivaram contributed humorous essays. This is one of the

forms which lost lustre under the attack of the Navyas, and its virtual disappearance was certainly an impoverishment of literature.

Biography and autobiography yielded ample material of rich human interest and also enriched prose. Dr. D V Gundappa was one of the first to essay this form, and his *Dewan Rangacharlu* was one of the first biographies of this period. He continued to use the form with variations (it is a great pity he did not write an autobiography) and in the last years of his life gave brief sketches of persons who had earned his admiration. These sketches recreate for us the Mysore State of the last decade of the last century and the first half of this century. They reveal a refined and liberal mind and a warm personality. Autobiographies of exceptional vigour are Shivarama Karanth's *Huchu Manassina Hattu Mukhagalu*, and the volumes of *Smrithi Patalagalu* (these last, a little uneven, offer the company of a splendidly stored and sanely critical mind) and Rajaratnam's *Hathu Varshagalu*; reminiscences radiant with wisdom and humour like Navaratna Rama Rao's *Kelavu Nenapugalu* and visions of faith like Masti's *Bhava* illustrate the rich harvest in this field. Kuvempu's *Nenapina Doniyalli* is yet to be completed.

Journalism and literature became allies in many causes in this period. Some of our best prose writers

were also journalists. Siddavanahalli Krishna Sharma wrote crisp, clear and picturesque Kannada. In books like *Parnakuti* he created the very atmosphere of Gandhiji's ashrama and made the reader see Gandhiji. The sentences were short, often verbless, but concrete and lucid. He was an unrivalled master of the art of verbal portraiture.

Prose came to be employed for a variety of purposes. Travelogue flowered in this period. Shivarama Karanth, B. G. L. Swamy, V. Seetharamaiah, Gokak—all recorded their experiences as visitors to distant lands. The tradition has continued and, in recent years a host of others have made arm-chair travelling both delightful and educative. A. N. Moorthy Rao's *Aparavayaskana Amerikayathre* is the best representative of this class of books. Prose renderings and summaries of classics have appeared from time to time. The summit of these achievements is A. R. Krishna Sastry's *Vachana Bharata*. The prose of this work is sheer delight. It is clear, incisive, economical, majestic, a miraculous blending of economy with lucidity. The introduction written by the author to this volume is itself invaluable.

This age saw the beginnings of popular scientific writing. Bellave Venkatanaranappa, who was the Secretary of the Kannada Sahitya Parishat and presided over the Twenty-Second Kannada Literary Conference

(1937) founded an association called 'Karnataka Vijnana Pracharini Samiti' and was the author of *Jeevana Vijnana* – a work on the biological sciences. This bears testimony both to the development of Kannada prose and to the interest in sciences in this age. Single-handed Karanth brought out a four-volume Science Encyclopaedia entitled *Vijnana Jagathu* (1959-64). R. L. Narasimhaiah is another shining name in this field. Dr. B. G. L. Swamy, *Hasuru Honnu* combines clear and precise exposition of scientific material with humour and the art of verbal caricature.

Literary Criticism

The Navodaya Age inherited the poetics and the aesthetics in Sanskrit. Most of the writers came from families wellknown for their erudition and had traditional instruction in Sanskrit. As has been well recognized, the scholars of ancient India gave the world invaluable theories like those of Rasa, Alankara and Dwani; but applied criticism is sadly lacking in ancient India.

The creative writers of the Navodaya Age had also to be the critics of the Age. Most of them were students of English Literature. We find in them a happy blending of the native wealth and borrowing from the West. They found many similarities between the attitudes and views of Indian writers of poetics and the English critics. Periodicals like 'Prabhudda

Karnataka' and 'Jayakarnataka' did much both to acquaint critics in different parts of Karnataka with one another's views and to popularize criticism. The first serious consideration of literature and its function was probably D V G's *Sahitya mathu Janajeevana* (Literature and the Life of the People); this was a talk he gave in 1920. The first discussion of the nature and function of literary criticism was probably Masti's *Sahityadalli Vimarsheya Karya* (1924). A number of wellknown writers of this period — B. M. S., Masti, Bendre, Vi. See., Karanth, Rajaratnam, C. K. Venkataramiah, V K Gokak, T N Srikantiah, and M. R. Srinivasamurthy, to name only a few — travelled extensively and lectured on literature in general, and on classics like Pampa, Ranna, Kumaravyasa, the Vachanakaras, Harihara and Raghavanka; they familiarized the average reader with concepts like 'rasa' and 'dhwani'. Considering that barely ten per cent could read and write, that most people lived in villages, that travelling was not easy and that the radio was practically unknown, the work these devoted men did to carry literature to the people moves us to admiration even today.

These writers also helped readers get acquainted with and learn to appreciate the important works of their contemporaries. Rajaratnam was a tireless missionary in this respect. Masti's foreword to Bendre's *Nadaleele* and T N Srikantiah's foreword to P T Narasimhachar's *Ahalye* are classic instances.

These critics did exceedingly valuable work. Masti declared that criticism was not inferior to creative writing, and led the way. His *Adikavi Valmiki* is probably one of the finest studies of the great epic in any Indian language. This and several essays in his *Vimarshe* volumes reveal Masti as a critic with excellent discrimination and insights. Two of A R Krishna Sastry's works are classics—*Samskruta Nataka* and *Bankim Chandra*. T N Srikantaiah's exposition of Indian poetics, with apt illustrations from ancient and contemporary writers, *Bharathiya Karyameemamase* is one of the summits of the achievements of the Navodaya Age. In M R Srinivasamurthy and P G Halakatti Vachana Sahitya found two untiring scholars to preserve its treasures. With admirable patience and devotion they collected, compiled and interpreted vachanas. Channappa Uttangi rendered the same service for Sarvajna. All this meant that, while the creative writers were enriching the age with meaningful innovations, scholar-critics were exploring and interpreting the literature of the past and consolidating the traditions. The study of the classics from Pampa to Muddana was enthusiastically pursued, and in addition to individual studies, collections of critical articles appeared. Painstakingly edited texts and abridgments were also brought out.

The poetics expounded by the Navodaya critics were mainly derived from the Sanskrit predecessors; they wove into it certain concepts and ideas taken

from English critics. Delight, refined delight, arising from 'rasanubhava' is the gift of poetry. Poetry does not teach directly; rather, it refines the emotions and liberalizes the sympathies; it persuades as the beloved does. The poet needs genius. His genius endows him with a vision. The poet composes under inspiration. But genius and inspiration alone do not suffice. His critical faculty has to be alert. The statement that the intellect does not dominate poetry as it does the literature of knowledge does not mean that the intellect has no part in the creative activity. Such were the tenets of the critical creed of the Age.

The achievement of the critics of the Navodaya Period is most impressive. It was an age of sound scholarship and perceptive criticism. The creative writing of the past and the poetics of the past, both in Sanskrit and in English, were studied with loving devotion. But it was not an age of just enthusiastic repetition. Fundamental issues were raised and scholars like S. V. Ranganna, T. N. Srikantiah, Vi. Sec., Gokak, and Kuvempu brought to these discussions the sensibilities of a poet and a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit, Kannada and English Literatures. Some of them were students of European literatures also. So they kept open the windows on world literature and saved Kannada Literature, in an age of hubbly enthusiasm and pride, from parochialism. They kept

the pinnacles of world literature constantly before the reader. They did not have a tradition of applied criticism. But they did as much valuable work in the field of practical study as in poetics and aesthetics. Their analysis and assessment covered both earlier classics and contemporary creative writing. They stressed the function of literature as delight, and thus saved it, in an age of national struggle and re-creation of the national integrity, from excessive didacticism. It took up the task of building up the technical terminology that the new criticism would need. S. V. Ranganna inaugurated the study of style.

A Magnificent Age

The Navodaya writers did not adopt a label and did not regard themselves as writers of a single school with certain objectives and do's and don'ts. Subsequently new creeds and schools appeared, and these directed severe attacks against the Navodaya writers. But looking at the achievement of these writers dispassionately one is moved to wonder and admiration. Thrilled with the discovery of English and European Literatures and history and political thinking and institutions and, at the same time, filled with a pride for their own culture and literature, they absorbed the new influences and drew strength from them without being swept off their feet. They took over several forms and nativized them. They imbued Kannada

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Literature with a new spirit of secularism, humanism and modernity, without totally breaking away from the central tradition. Through translations, adaptations and critical studies they kept the Western writers as well as writers in other Indian languages constantly before the Kannada reader. They combined the devoted study of earlier literature with innovation, experimentation and consolidation. Prose gained range, flexibility, elegance, crispness and lucidity. It has been said that this was the literature of the middle class and that it was not revolutionary. It did not shut its eyes to suffering and injustice. Not only Karanth's novels but Bendre's poems; Kuvempu's poems and Masti's *Tiruppani*, to mention only the works of the first generation, attest their social awareness. They were not revolutionary for the very good reason that they believed that all ills were rooted in slavery and that once Freedom came, Indians, ruling themselves, would put an end to economic and social evils. We ought not to look at this literature through the spectacles of disenchantment of the post-Independence period.

Before we move on to the study of movements which swept the literary scene in the 'forties, the 'fifties and the 'seventies, it is necessary to remind ourselves that the Navodaya spirit is not a thing of the past. Works imbued with this spirit have continued to appear.

CHAPTER IX — The Pragathisheela Interlude

The first of the movements referred to towards the end of the last chapter was the Pragathisheela (Progressive) Movement. It is important to remember that Navodaya was not a movement and was not reacting to any earlier school. Its writers did not have the self-consciousness and the need to justify affirmed objectives, and were, therefore, free from the limitations that a declared departure entails.

The Pragathisheela Revolt was led by A. N. Krishna Rao (Aa. Na. Kri.), a writer with a magnetic personality and rare popularity. The Progressive Movement was an all-India movement, and in Karnataka it found a powerful leader in Krishna Rao. Novelist and short story writer primarily, though he wrote some plays, Krishna Rao was a speaker of rare charm and persuasiveness. His very first novel, *Jeevana Yatre* (1934), was a challenge to accepted notions of morality ; he also essayed the difficult theme of sexual relations more frankly than had been done by any Kannada writer before. Several young and talented writers joined him, while some worked for the cause without actually acknowledging his leadership. It is interesting to recall that senior writers like D.K. Bharadwaj and Sriranga were associated with the movement.

The Prgathisheelas wanted the writer to be in the vanguard of the fight for social justice and radical reforms. *Nagna Satya* was the title of one of Krishna Rao's novels - and the phrase summed up what, according to the Progressives, the subject of the true writer was to be—the Naked Truth. They accused the majority of Navodaya writers of being conservatives and trying to please the royal court; they declared that these writers were mere aesthetes, singing about stars and flowers and rainbows, turning a blind eye to the cruelty and injustice which disfigured contemporary life. They characterized the greater part of Navodaya Literature as expressing the euphoria of the middle class and the prudery and notions of respectability of that class. They quoted from Lenin and Marx, and Mayakovsky and Maxim Gorky.

These writers sought to carry on a crusade. Their works were charged with missionary zeal. Krishna Rao himself wrote a number of novels and short stories, seeking to unveil the ugliness of contemporary social life. Some of them like *Nagna Satya*, *Sanjegathalu* and *Shanisanthana* provoked bitter controversies. Gifted writers like Basavaraja Kattimani, T. R. Subba Rao (Ta. Ra. Su.), Kulakunda Shiva Rao (Niranjana) and Subramanyaraja Urs (Chaduranga) belonged to the Progressive School.

The School certainly gave some fine works. Unfortunately most of Krishna Rao's work was superficial and his

gift of narration was what pleased the reader most. But his *Udayaraga* and *Sandhyaraga*, can stand the test of time. Subba Rao's language was more pictorial and warmer with emotion, and soon he became an immensely popular writer. His range of subjects was wide, and he wrote about the factory worker, the compositor in the press, the obscure woman struggling for freedom, the beggar boy and others in prisons of many kinds. Kattimani brought rural life into literature in a big way. His language was powerful, sharp and vivid. Niranjana's writing had greater refinement and liveliness. Chaduranga's writing worked quietly and his short stories essayed new themes. Among the memorable novels of this period are Kattimani's *Mohada Baleylli*, *Jwalamukhiya Mele* and *Jaratariya Jagadguru*, Ta. Ra. Su.'s *Munjavininda Munjavu*, *Bidugadeya Bedi*, *Hamsa Geeta* (which, not characteristic of the Pragathisheela Movement, won popularity when it was filmed as 'Basant Bahar'), Niranjana's *Ranganmana Vatara* and *Chirasmarane*, and Chaduranag's *Sarvamangala*. As a group these writers sought to expose exploitation in religious institutions, factories and industries, the systematic exploitation of the farmer and woman, and the tyranny of the petty tyrants of the village and the factory. They used the short story effectively; Niranjana's *Koneya Giraki* is at once intensely human and superbly symbolic; the dumb girl who is everybody's bedmate symbolizes the exploited dumb, and the eagle circling above the dying girl symbolizes the repulsive and merciless exploitor.

Curiously enough, the Pragathisheelas who gave Kannada some excellent novels and a fine crop of short stories, seldom employed verse or drama or the essay. They wrote a few biographical and critical studies of the men of letters who appealed to them. Their literary criticism was mostly restricted to theoretical expositions of their position. They quoted extensively from Marx and Marxist writers. A considerable proportion of Krishna Rao's critical efforts was polemical, and he lacked balance and perspective. But this is not surprising in one who was espousing a cause.

The Pragathisheela Movement which burst on the literary scene in the early forties had a brief life. In the early fifties the Navyas mounted a scathing attack on them, and the Pragathisheelas did not defend themselves effectively.

The Pragathisheelas were unlucky. They did not have the chance to clear the dust of controversy and settle down to solid work, as the Navyas had. They did not command attention in universities, and they discovered that this was a severe handicap, as the leading Navyas were academically highly qualified, had a fine command of critical terminology and commanded attention in universities and academic bodies. The Navya attack had much substance in it, only it was not the whole truth. The Pragathisheelas, in their works, did not have the detachment which we associate with a work of literature.

They could not achieve æsthetic distance. They were rhetorical in their use of language, and did not realize the virtue of economy and letting a situation speak for itself. They did not pay sufficient attention to the workings of the mind (this was particularly true of the novels of Krishna Rao, who wrote more than a hundred of them) and so we know little of the inner lives of the characters; they tend to be types — the hardworking, honest peasant, the hard-hearted landlord, the simple trusting village maiden, the rich lustful youth, the hypocritical swamiji and so on.

But, while all this is true, there are other things to consider. First of all, most of the Pragathisheela writers were young and took time to complete their apprenticeship. Most of them had given up studies early in life, and had to study literature — particularly literature in the English language by themselves. There was not much critical material in Kannada. Considering this, their acquaintance with English and European Literatures speaks volumes for their devotion to their cause. Secondly, most of them showed a remarkable development in a short span. Kattimani's *Jvalamukhiya Mele* shows a departure from the simplified contrast between the oppressed and virtuous poor and the villainous rich.

The Pragathisheelas brought a new vitality to Kannada Literature. They brought into literature areas of life and experience which the writer had, by and large, ignored.

They directed the reader's sympathies along new channels. They brought the struggle for freedom—a glowing and challenging part of the nation's experience—into literature in a big way. Rustic life was depicted and interpreted. More than anything else, the Pragathisheela writer brought an awareness of the importance of the economic context to life. The Navodaya writer was keenly aware of the injustice and double standards embedded in contemporary life. But he regarded society as an assembly of individuals, and believed that the education of the individual was the way to social reformation. The Pragathisheela writer brought an awareness of the influence of the economic system on the individual's entire personality and the very values of his life. (It is surprising that Aa.Na. Kri. did not realize the inherent contradiction between the general position of the Pragathisheela School, and his earlier pictures of benevolent landlords and masters.) The important issues of contemporary life were sharply focussed by this school.

There was a certain amount of literary innocence about the Pragathisheelas. They were no match for the highly sophisticated Navyas. A reappraisal of Pragathisheela Literature is overdue.

The fervour of the Pragathisheela Movement soon died down. It is interesting to note that most of the writers of this school, while they continued to write, virtually joined the Navodaya School. A. N. Krishna Rao went on to write novels enshrining the greatness of Indian

womanhood and the values of Indian culture. Basavaraja Kattimani wrote *Giriya Navilu*, a novel on the life of Akka Mahadevi. This is not to suggest that there is anything wrong intrinsically in what Aa. Na. Kri. and Kattimani did, but to point out that the Pragathisheelas moved towards Navodaya later. Ta. Ra. Su. wrote a novel on the life of Satyakama, a novel bearing the title *Nalku x Nalku = Ondu* (*Four x Four = One*). Chaduranga recently published *Vaishakha*, a novel presenting the complex life of a village at different social and economic levels, but centering around exploitation. The use of the stream of consciousness here enables us to realize the full impact of exploitation on the personality of the victim. This is one of the fine novels of recent years. Niranjana, who wrote the remarkable novel, *Chirasmarane* retains the spirit of his earlier works. *Chirasmarane* was based on certain incidents in a village in Kerala in 1941. The novel depicts the planting of the seed of revolution in the soil of a dumb village. The idea of the inevitability of revolution gets concretized in the life of a small boy. It is true that the characterization is simple, but the eternal conflict between the heartless bag of money and the helpless poor could not have been depicted so clearly and concretely otherwise. Niranjana went on to write some fine historical novels, and a remarkable novel, *Mrithyunjaya*. It is the story of the revolt against the Pharaoh of Egypt forty-five centuries ago, led by Menepthah. On the one side are the combined forces of autocracy and priestcraft, on the other the labourers toiling to raise monuments to the dead kings.

It is the story of the fight for human dignity and the right to breathe freely.

The Bandaya Movement (the Movement of Protest) which gained momentum in the last decade is similar to the Pragathisheela Movement in some ways. Both ascribe a social responsibility to the writer. Both stress the importance of the economic structure. Both believe that only through a revolution can social justice be assured, and not through the education of the individual. Both demand that literature should develop into a power; implicit in this is the expectation that the writer will make himself understood by as large a number of readers as possible, and the assumption that the aim of literary composition is communication. Both reject – the Pragathisheela movement implicitly, the Bandaya School explicitly – the idea of alienation. The differences are also striking. Though some of the Pragathisheelas were leftists, the school as a whole steered a middle course, and Krishna Rao emphatically refuted the charge that the Pragathisheelas was leftists. The earlier school did not believe in violent revolution; it adhered to Gandhiji's teaching of nonviolence. The Bandaya school is not so explicit. The Pragathisheelas explicitly recognized the glory of Indian heritage, and Krishna Rao quoted again and again from the sacred texts. Some of the Bandayas at any rate have written disparagingly about India and the tradition and culture of this land.

Before we turn to later developments in Kannada Literature it is necessary to note the context in which Navodaya and Pragathisheela Literatures came to be written. Navodaya Literature was written when the writer was caught in a conflict between pride and humiliation; he was writing when society was growing conscious of its lapses and shame, but was also discovering its past achievements. By the time the Pragathisheela writer appeared on the scene the country had, by its heroic struggle, redeemed itself. When Freedom dawned in 1947, the writer was both aware of the darker side of Indian history and engaged in revitalizing the sources of strength, justice and reformation.

CHAPTER XII — Independence and After

Navodaya and Pragathisheela were both alive and fruitful when Independence dawned. Some of the finest contributions of the Navodaya school were published after Independence — like Masti's historical novels, Devudu's mythological novels, Karanth's *Alida Mele*, *Kudiyara Koosu*, *Mookajjiya Kanasuzalu* and *Dharmarayana Samsara*, Kuvempu's *Malegalalli Madumagalu*, some of Inamdar's novels and K. S. Narasimhaswami's poems. The Pagathisheela movement was waxing strong.

In December 1950, addressing the Kannada Literary Conference in Bombay, Dr. Gokak urged the need for poetry to acquire a new outlook on life and become 'modern'. But what he was advocating boiled down to the acquisition of a total perspective combined with new techniques. When the 'Navya' movement took shape it chalked out an entirely new path.

Navya — Poetry

The inaugurator of this new trend was M. Gopalkrishna Adiga (b. 1918) He brought out a collection of poems entitled *Bhavataranga* in 1946 ; it contained some fine poems in the Navodaya vein. But his two poems *Krishnana*

Kolalu and *Himagiriya Kandara* which appeared in 1952 showed him breaking new ground. The poems puzzled quite a number of readers. These heralded the Navya movement.

Later, in 1952, in his Foreword to his collection *Nadedu Banda Daari* Adiga explained what he was trying to do. He declared that the inspiration of Navodaya was dead, that poetry tended to lose itself in vague metaphysics and mysticism. He argued that the poet who sought to stretch his hands to the stars had first to plant his feet firmly on the ground. The disenchantment and bewilderment following the achievement of Freedom and the need to foster the spirit of calm enquiry and hard work must be recognized. A new kind of poetry was demanded by the new age.

With this realization Adiga wrote poetry which satirized the demigods of the contemporary age. But it was not just entertainingly satirical. It mirrored the disenchantment of the thoughtful Indian and the feeling that links with the past had snapped. Adiga was influenced in his technique by the T. S. Eliot of *Ash Wednesday* and *The Waste Land*. The diction was closer to the language of everyday life than ever before (but he also knew how to make effective use of the Sanskrit element in Kannada); there were broken lines and a halting rhythm; lines and phrases from earlier poets and from English poets were woven into the texture of the poem to produce ironical effects.

Adiga has been growing as a poet. It is important to remember that he had successfully written in the Navodaya tradition and had assessed its resources and phases; his departure from this tradition was a genuine and compelling necessity. He was not content with superficial satire, and wit and clever turns of phrases. He was impelled by a genuine concern for the values of life and sought to probe experience. His poetry gained in depth and displayed a vital interest in the past with an unfaltering concern for the present. Fundamental issues of life like man's relation with the earth and with Time were treated without sentimentality and with an awareness of the needs of man as a feeling and thinking creature. He unfolded new potentialities of the language and used it to probe experience at different levels. The later Adiga has been accused of being a purveyor of traditional values, of being a reactionary. His criticism of the Leftist ideology has irritated quite a few readers. But Adiga has declared that he opposes regimentation of any kind.

Adiga is one of the significant poets of this half a century. He has not only written first rate poetry but compelled his fellow-writers and readers to think seriously about literature and its relevance in modern times; he has also stimulated a number of younger creative writers.

In the earlier poems in the new vein there was a feverishness, a lack of total control which gradually disappeared from his poems. The *Bhoomigeeta* collection

established his claim to the title of a major poet. Here is a constant but not forced awareness of the complexity of experience and of the tension in man between the call of the sky and the pull of the earth. The title piece and the poem *Bhoota* are among the major achievements of Adiga. The latter poem is a probing of the relationship between the past and the present. In a fine analysis Dr. Ananthamurthy has pointed out how the poem simultaneously concerns itself with the past, with ghosts and with the unconscious, all of which are suggested by the Kannada word 'bhoota'. It suggests the culmination of life in a splendid achievement, concluding with the image of the golden towers of temples and shrines.

Adiga's poetry is marked by the fusion of feeling and thought, by the use of pun and irony to suggest different responses to an object or situation, by density of image and symbol, by a verbal realization of the complexity of experience and by language operating at different levels—standard, colloquial and slang but all the while sharpening introspection and negating illusions. His earlier 'Navya' poetry is characterized by tensions held within a tight structure. In his later poems there is a relaxing of this tightness, but the earlier poems exercised a strong influence on the younger generation.

Many characteristics of Adiga's poetry may be seen in Bendre's poetry. The verbal realization of complex experience, the probing of experience, daring use of

language, density of image and symbol—all these are to be found in the older poet. But there is in Adiga a sense of urgency inspired by the awareness of the contemporary political and social context which is rarely present in Bendre. Adiga's fierce honesty is reminiscent of the Vachanakaras. With him began, in modern Kannada poetry, a recognition of the role of the critical intellect. The writer deliberately endeavoured to make his composition multidimensional. Adiga influenced not only poetry but also the novel and the short story. The influence he exercised by his clear, sharp and stimulating critical writings about literature must be recognized.

So began the Navya movement. B. C. Ramachandra Sharma (b. 1925), who was a little younger than Adiga and who had also written poems both in the romantic vein and in the Pragathisheela vein, soon joined him. While his poetry does not have the richness of experience which we find in Adiga's, the intellectual element is more pronounced. He is concerned with the creative urge (which often manifests itself in sex) and the fertility and fulfilment of life. *Pandu Madri* is one of his finest poems. Another gifted poet of the Navya School is Gangadhara Chittala. By no means a prolific writer, Chittala has given evidence of a first rate talent. Here is a poet in love with life, a poet whose poetry is charged with a rare zest. Coupled with this is the sense of death overarching life. There is also a recognition of the need to rise above flux in a world governed by Time. Poets like P. Lankesh

(b. 1935), Chandrashekhara Kambara (b. 1938) and A. K. Ramanujan (b. 1929) widened the frontiers of Navya poetry. Lankesh refuses to use mythological allusions or imagery; he combines anger with energy. His *Avva* is probably the only Navya poem recognizing the significance and preciousness of human relations, without the tinge of irony; but it does it with characteristic freedom from sentimentality. Kambara was probably not at home in the Navya School. The title piece of his very first collection, *Helathina Kela*, showed that here was a poet who could command the diction and the tunes of folk poetry like Bendre, but who used them to embody the tensions of life caught between tradition and a new culture. He has written poems which demand to be sung and not just read aloud. The power of the sexual urge and the conflict between the present and the past are his dominant themes. Ramanujan is a remarkable poet. Few have probably succeeded in draining poetry of the personal element so thoroughly as he. His *Hokkulali Hoovilla* was a sensation. He presents clear, vivid pictures with an apparent casualness. Some of his poems are remarkable for their structure. But one feels that he has chosen a path which can lead only to a cul-de-sac. His is poetry with no moral concerns; his poems have no moral centres. There can, therefore, be no assessment of experience, no facing life. Liveliness, distancing, experience, casualness of tone, a sense of humour and a delightful unexpectedness in the development of a poem make his poetry an enjoyable intellectual experience.

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The third collection, *Mahaprasthan*, of K. V. Thirumalesh (b. 1940) showed him to be an original poet. The title piece traces, in a few lines, a remarkable development of personality. The opening lines, picturing an energetic and flamboyant actor of a Yakshagana play, are splendid. But gradually the poem moves inward, the ego softens, the awareness of death deepens and the spirit mellows. A poet who constantly experimented with form and who sought to be always himself was Sumathindra Nadiga (b. 1935). Nissar Ahmed (b. 1936) has achieved enviable popularity. He can fully capture in words a mood or reflection; this is both his strength and his weakness. Chandrashekhara Patil's language can cut swiftly and deep, laying bare sham and superficiality.

Only some of the Navya poets have been mentioned here. The important point is that though they all belonged to a single school and at least for a time acknowledged the leadership of Adiga (Lankesh described Adiga as a poet who opened the eyes of a generation) they were independent minds and voices.

In a short period after the publication of Adiga's innovative poems the Navya movement gained momentum. It attracted a number of talented intellectuals. Adiga's poetry sprang from a compelling personal need to clear the cobwebs of the age. U.R. Ananthamurthy and Shanthinatha Desai brought Navya literature the Existential content. Influenced by Sartre, Camus and Kafka,

these writers stressed the alienation of man in an indifferent universe and made literature the quest for identity. Lankesh, influenced by Salinger, stressed the 'phony' nature of modern life. All of them reacted against what they regarded as the vague idealism, the verbal extravagance and the sentimentality of the Navodaya and Pragathisheela writers. They aimed at brevity, compactness, crispness and irony in the use of language. They sought 'stability' in the sense in which Cleanth Brooks used it. ('Invulnerability' to irony is the stability of a context in which the internal pressures balance and mutually support each other). Literature became introspective with the accent on anti-heroism and integrity. 'Form' came to be stressed and a work of literature was seen as organized experience embodied in language. The 'Navyas' were experimentalists, believing in the inevitability of form. Free verse dominated poetry. Imagery, metaphor and symbol were studied with interest.

Navya — Fiction

Next to poetry fiction drew talent. The major influences, as has already been indicated, were Kafka, Camus, Sartre and Salinger. The 'closed' novel and short story gave place to the 'open' novel and story. The story was of little importance. Character was no longer viewed as a sum of qualities present in different proportions. Complexity, instability, tension—these were studied with interest. Psychological interest was dominant, and Freud

was a considerable influence. Interest in myth, anthropology and sociology grew. Both in poetry and in the short story logical coherence and the cause-and-effect link with which the reader had been familiar were abandoned; the stress now was on internal evolution. Introspection led to autobiographical narration and monologue.

The first 'Navya' novel was *Mukthi* by Shanthinatha Desai (b. 1929). [Navya critics have named Sriranga's *Vishwamithrana Srishti* (1934), Rao Bahadur's *Gramayana* (1957), and Shankara Mokashi Punekar's *Gangavva Gangamayi* (1956) as novels anticipating the Navya movement]. It is an Existentialist approach to life. It questions accepted standards of judgment. Yashwant Chittal (b. 1928) in *Mooru Daarigalu* presents a difficult situation and three solutions worked out by three persons. But none of them is entirely satisfactory. Probably the best novel of the Navya school is *Samskara* (1966) by U. R. Ananthamurthy (b. 1932). The novel proved immensely popular and has appeared on the All India literary map. What partly helped its popularity was the seemingly straight narration. It seemed to be narrating a fascinating story. So even those who were deterred by the apparent formlessness of Navya fiction were drawn to this novel. Ananthamurthy is the master of a lucid style with an amazing range, of writing which is at once concrete and rich in suggestion, sensuous and reflective. The total absence of satire and irony in the characterization of Praneshacharya made the investigation of the

strength of his convictions sensitive and sympathetic. The weakness of the novel lies in the fact that after his traumatic experience Praneshacharya is not tested; his sickly wife is conveniently thrown to the dustbin of death. But this is one of the great novels of modern Kannada, and transcended the borders of its school in its appeal. Lankesh uses fantasy in his novel *Biruku* (1967) to expose the 'phoney' nature of the contemporary society. The central figure, an young man, is exposed to a variety of assaults on his personality. But the novel is interesting only as an experiment. Purnachandra Tejaswi (b. 1939) gave in *Swarupa* an adaptation of Camu's *The Fall*; it brings out both the helplessness of man in a bewildering and incomprehensible world, and the inescapable burden of moral responsibility. Ananthamurthy's second novel, *Bharatipura* (1973) was an ambitious attempt. It is an allegory of the present contemporary state of India, stifled by superstition; the novel is inspired by the conviction that the Harijan alone can save the country by waking up and asserting himself. There are some good things in the novel, like the picture of the lifeless and crushed boys of the slums. But the reformist hero Jagannatha dooms the novel to failure. For all his fervent talk he makes not a single sacrifice for his cause, and is not exposed to any challenge in the novel. He is an ineffective and self-deceiving young man, but unfortunately the irony of the situation is not apparent to his creator. His third novel, *Avasthe* (1978) centres round a hero genuinely involved in the world around him; he comes from the people, and is

exposed to several - and at times opposed - influences. There is a sense of failure, but it is the failure of a brave spirit which has deliberately sought integrity and the wholeness of life. There is a certain unreality about *Bharatipura*; there is none about *Avasthe*. But this a novel without the presence of the masses, and therefore, the suggestion that the country is paralysed remains unconvincing. Shanthinatha Desai's later novel *Vikshepa* (1971) presents the weak and casual hero, the young man who does not know what he wants, is tossed about by his whims and fancies, and cannot bring joy into the lives of others. His latest novel, *Sambandhagalu* (1982) investigates the nature of human relations.

Navya fiction includes some interesting novels like Srikrishna Alanahalli's *Kaadu*, Giri's *Gathi*, *Sthiti* and Kamarupi's *Kuduremotte*.

The student of the Navya novel is surprised by the limited output of the school. In the course of twenty years the school has given some twenty novels worth mentioning. Sustained discussion about these novels has hidden this fact.

Navya yielded a far richer crop in the field of the short story. K. Sadashiva's *Nalliyalli Neeru Banthu* hinted at a new vein. Ananthamurthy ranks as a major writer. His stories are an investigation of all that arrests the flowering of the human personality. The individual has to expose himself to the varied experiences of life; and he is

to do this that his personality might evolve. Society, tradition, a blindly accepted notion of strength - any of these may come in the way of the blossoming of the personality. In his best stories Ananthamurthy studies the nature and the ways of these crippling forces. He was the first to use the expressions 'Brahmana' and 'Sudra' to describe the love of refinement and the nature of the earth, earthly respectively. The two are to blend if the human personality is to respond to the richness of life. Ananthamurthy investigates all that inhibits this growth. Like Masti before him he makes the short story the medium of a total response to life. And he is a marvellous and conscientious craftsman. It is, therefore, no wonder that he gave a new turn to the history of the Kannada short story. It became more introspective. It probed the psyche of the characters deeply. It tested accepted values in the crucible of experience. Ananthamurthy uses symbols unobtrusively. A story like *Prakrithi* illustrates his achievement. The central figure, Sankappayya, is apparently a man of granite. He is not without affection or concern for the happiness of his children, but he scoffs at weakness. There is nothing that man cannot overcome if only he has a strong enough will. His daughter, still young, has become a widow. Sankappayya cannot see why she cannot live in his house, curbing the natural demands of the flesh. He seeks to subdue nature - nature in him, and nature as the world of physical phenomena. And he is defeated. The story works at different levels unobtrusively. It tells a fascinating story, but through the

insights into the workings of the minds of the characters and through the symbols (like the tiger) it carries us to different levels of experience. The story is a brilliant illustration of the organic nature of literary composition.

Some of the other important writers of short stories of the Navya school may now be mentioned. Lankesh wrote some remarkable stories. A Lankesh story usually presents very ordinary incidents; but the order of these incidents and the tone of the story invest them with significance. *Rotti* is among his best stories. It centres round a woman on a railway platform and a hungry man who snatches her 'rotti'. The story is Kafkasque; the situation seems to change but does not, and a suffocating atmosphere is built up. But it goes beyond Kafka in that it asks the uncomfortable question: 'Is the loaf you eat your own?' And within the span of a few pages it shows the nature of the structure of society and the guardians of the law it has created. Craftsmanship was conspicuous in the stories of Yashwant Chittal, when he was writing in the Navya vein. A hundred details neatly fell into place in a story like *Sere* or *Aata* or *Payana*. The first of these presents the assertion of the erotic urge in a young man and a girl. I have always considered *Aata* remarkable in one way; I have not come across another story about death which is so full of the zest for life, so full of activity, laughter and gaiety. Purnachandra Tejaswi's *Huliyurina Sarahaddu* is a remarkable collection. Among other writers of note are

Shanthinatha Desai, Giraddi Govindaraja and Ramachandra Sharma. K. Sadashiva who has already been mentioned wrote some lovely stories like *Ramana Savari* *Santhge Hodaddu*.

Apart from the characteristics of Navya fiction already mentioned, Giraddi Govindaraja, an important critic of this school, lists the following: (i) The Navya writer is engaged in a personal quest and does not take on himself the burden of social reformation or revolution. (ii) The Navya writer opposes bourgeois values. He is primarily interested in the bewilderment and the conflict within the modern mind. (iii) He is engaged in the quest of values without the illusion that every problem has a definite and easy solution. (iv) He is the foe of 'respectability' and turns the light on his own weaknesses. (v) He writes without inhibitions because he is engaged in this quest. (vi) He recognizes the limitations of the 'realism' of his predecessors and seeks to transcend them. (vii) He sees technique as the bridge between form and content. (viii) The so-called 'obscurity' of Navya writing results from the gulf between him and the reader.

The Absurd Theatre

The Navyas shaped the Absurd Theatre. Inspiration came from Samuel Becket, Ionesco, Pinter and Adamov. *Yayathi* (1961) by Girish Karnad is sometimes described as ushering in the Absurd Theatre in Kannada. The cry of Puru at the end, 'What, O God, is the meaning of all

this?' is, according to these critics, the agonized cry of the bewildered modern man. Some of Sriranga's plays anticipate the Absurd Theatre. So does Bendre's *Saayo Aata*. The unification of Karnataka in 1956 gave a fillip to drama. The Ravindra Kalakshetra provided a stage for experiments. In 1966 Sumathindra Nadig's Kannada rendering, *Bakka Thaleya Nartaki*, of Ionesco's *The Bald Prima Donna*, was staged in Bangalore. With this the Absurd Theatre was definitely born.

The word 'Absurd' here means 'out of tune'. This drama presents the spectacle of man, a rational creature, in a universe which baffles him. Ionesco also presents in this play the tragedy of language - that language cannot really establish communication, that each man remains an island. In an absurd play the incidents are not related in any recognizable way. It tends both to show man out of tune with the universe and the impossibility of communication between human beings.

Absurd Drama had only a brief history in Kannada. After all, a play has to justify itself in the theatre, and the Absurd plays were too perplexing for the Kannada spectator. Explanations and commentaries cannot help, if the play cannot hold the spectator. Moreover, in the West the Absurd play came as a reaction against the well-made play, but here we did not have the well-made play at all. Chandrashekhara Kambara, Chandrashekhara Patil, N. Ratna and Chandrakantha Kusanur wrote some Absurd plays which could appeal to the initiated.

Navya—Literary Criticism

The Navya Epoch enriched literary criticism and built up a splendid body of applied criticism. The foundation was laid by Kirthinatha Kurtakoti whose *Yugadharmamathu Sahitya Darshana* (1962) was a remarkable study of modern Kannada Literature. He had before him the contributions of Navodaya, Pragathisheela and Navya writers. 'The historical studies in these volumes,' said the writer in his introductory remarks, 'are literary essays offering a historical approach to modern Kannada Literature, and not historical essays.' He was not, he said, making final assessments of writers. The work contained studies of the developments of the various literary forms and discussed the important turns as well as the contribution of important writers. It would be easy to pick holes in what Kurthakoti did. A certain bias in favour of writers in North Karnataka whose work was closer to him is discernible. His observations would give the impression that Madhurachanna is a better poet than Kuvempu; the greater part of the section on Kuvempu is given to an exposition of the shortcomings and limitations of his poetry. Bellave Narahari Sastry is not even mentioned. Vi. See. receives less than justice. But after all such limitations have been recognized it must still be said that this is one of the major critical works of the Modern Age. Nothing on this scale had been attempted before. A comparable effort by a single writer came a decade later, with L.S. Seshagiri Rao's *Hosagunnada Sahitya*. Kurthakoti

employed the comparative method on a large scale, and his standards were uniformly high. Some of his assessments have since become the platitudes of Kannada criticism. Kurthakoti, for the first time, emphasized the nature and function of the symbol. He insisted on literature as art, but at the same time on literature for life's sake. His use of technical terms was felicitous and illuminating, and he gave literary tradition the right emphasis.

The Navya school produced quite a number of notable critics like Adiga himself, U. R. Ananthamurthy, M. G. Krishnamurthy, Sumathindra Nadig and Giraddi Govindaraja. By and large, this school was influenced by the New Critics of England and America. Jean Paul Sartre also was a major influence. These critics stress the organic nature of literary composition. They reject the concept of inspiration and stress the role of the critical faculty in the creative process. They emphasize that a work should realize experience verbally without simplifying it and thereby falsifying it. They insist that whatever 'happens' in a work must happen only through language and give considerable importance to the study of language, imagery and symbol. This led to stimulating explications, and new insights into the role of language in poetry. It also made the work the sole object of study and assessment.

The Navya School had some bright critics. Ananthamurthy, M. G. Krishnamurthy, Sumathindra Nadig and others offered perceptive explications. Both Ananthamurthy

and Krishnamurthy were also concerned with larger issues like Indianness and the East-West encounter. The former has always displayed remarkable literary tact; he can go to the heart of a composition, and see how it is different from others. In the midst of polemics Giraddi Govindaraja has remained sober and balanced. In all these critics one can see the assimilated influence of Western Literature.

Navya – an Assessment

The Navya movement is now more or less a spent force. It is not difficult to see why. These writers justified the influence of Eliot on the ground that they were writing, like him, in a context of disenchantment and of scepticism of idealistic professions. But what the country needed was purposeful endeavour. In its introspections Navya Literature lost touch with the people. Moreover, much of it was incomprehensible to the common reader, who, for all the assertions of these writers that literature demanded devoted study, did not have the leisure they had to study commentaries and explications. In later stages it became imitative and merely clever. Complexity for the sake of complexity, irony distorted into easy scoffing, overworking some of the technical innovations, the desire to shock the reader, lack of discipline of any kind—these proved the bane of Navya writing. There was also impoverishment of experience. So much of what makes up the life of the average man—the loveliness of nature, the sweetness of love and affection and loyalty, the joy of

friendship, love of one's country, for example—seemed forbidden territory to the Navya writer.

Navya Literature made the writer more aware of the demands of form. It made him suspicious of facile writing and vague mysticism. It placed a healthy emphasis on fidelity to experience. It sharpened the awareness of the writer's responsibility in the use of language. Multidimensionality and ambivalence gained importance. Literature sought to explore regions of the mind seldom recognized by the earlier writers. It promoted a closer relationship between literature and other branches of knowledge, and so an approach better related to the complexity of human nature became possible. Dream and fantasy received recognition. In criticism, it shocked both writer and reader into a re-examination of accepted ideas. It focussed attention on the work, and close reading of the text became the only way of justifying comments. The tools of criticism were sharpened and perfected.

On the other hand, the relationship between writer and reader was radically altered. The writer grew introspective, and the feeling of shared experience was lost. The devices were so startlingly unfamiliar that for the first time the complaint was voiced that literature was incomprehensible. It is a pity that Navya discarded literary forms like the personal essay and biography. Equally regrettable is the loss of lyricism. Also, in the context of the nation's life, it is questionable whether Navya Literature promoted the

right attitudes. The very fact that most of the leading lights of Navya Literature soon turned their illumination to other approaches indicated the very severe limitations of this school. It has certainly left a permanent impress on both reader and writer. The writer's artistic integrity and fidelity to experience have gained the right stress. Attention to economy and incisiveness in the use of language and an awareness of its composition and potentialities have become ingrained in both. Literature has once and for all become the probing and assessment of experience.

Outside Navya

Writers who did not identify themselves with any school continued to enrich literature following the bent of their genius. K. S. Narasimhaswamy is a remarkable poet in many ways. He sang the joys of marital love and of parenthood. Later, under the influence of Navya, his poetry grew complex. His poetry had always been characterized by rich visual images; now he blended it with symbolism. But later he outgrew this phase also. In his latest collection, *Tereda Bagilu*, there is a return to the earlier modes, but with a difference. Once again poems centre round episodes. A poem is often in the form of a dialogue. The poet also uses the monologue, so dear to the Navyas, but it is not used for introspective probing; on the other hand, it is narrative. But now the narration glimpses depths of experience, as in the title piece where the speaker feels as if he has glimpsed the realm of death and returned.

The bunch of songs with which the collection closes, *Rithuvaibhava*, in its description and emotional response to Nature, reminds us of what we had lost in Navya poetry. G. S. Shivarudrappa and Channaveera Kanavi have not received their due. It is customary to describe them as 'Samanvaya' poets – as poets who drew the best from every school, and leave it at that. But both are poets of considerable merit. Both have grown with the passing years. For example, Shivarudrappa's early poetry bears the stamp of Kuvempu. But gradually his expression has grown simpler, sparer and more economical; this change reflects a change in the poet's own thinking and response to life. He has grown more sensitive to suffering and less reliant on the tender care of an unseen Power, and there is a certain regret for man's folly and his refusal to grow as tall as he can. Kanavi's poetry has acquired complexity. There is a deceptive simplicity about his writing. A Kanavi poem, in recent years, imperceptibly moves towards a gentle reminder of the larger issues of life. He has a lyrical gift which sets him apart from the Navya school. He has also written some lovely sonnets in an age in which it has been largely neglected. Both Shivarudrappa and Kanavi have been influenced by Navya; without joining the Navya school, they have grown under that influence; they are introspective; they recognize the complex nature of the working of the mind; they use metaphor, image and symbol to convey complex states or responses; their language is at times colloquial; they are frequently ironical. But they

show an awareness of the richness of life and the preciousness of human relations not to be found in Navya.

In the sphere of drama, Girish Karnad's output is slender. But his *Tugalaqh* (1964) made a big impact. For one thing, here was a dramatist who remembered that a play is primarily meant to be acted. *Tugalaqh* is excellent theatre. It is also a dramatic embodiment of a vision of human nature. *Tugalaqh* is inspired by a great vision and lofty idealism, but his weakness asserts itself at crucial moments and determines his fate and that of his kingdom. The play is rich in irony, and conveys its ideas through a series of symbols. His *Hayavadana* is an attempt to present the vision of the pursuit of perfection in a world inherently imperfect. But it is not so successful as *Tugalaqh*.

In fiction, Dr. S. L. Bhyrappa (b. 1935) has not only achieved exceptional popularity but also drawn high praise and strong criticism. He has even been called a reactionary. But the strong appeal of his novels cannot be gainsaid. The very fact that both defence and attack are so vehement indicates that he succeeds in making readers think. In an age when the reader was growing weary of introspective characters who would not face life or take a decision, Bhyrappa created characters who had wills of their own, took decisions and faced the consequences. Moreover, the principal characters had clear-cut philosophies of their own, so that the novel also presented a clash of ideas.

Vamshavriksha (1965) catapulted him into fame. Since then he has remained one of the most important and controversial novelists. In the earlier novels there was a certain stiffness; the character's philosophy had not become a part of himself, and tended to be articulated too often. With the later novels thinking is a part of the action. How far he has mastered technique is reflected in a novel like *Anweshana* in which the hero does not appear at all; the title means 'Quest, and we see how the hero's personality is shaped and acquires strength, without our ever seeing him. Bhyrappa's recent novel, *Parva*, is based on the Mahabharata; it is an attempt - not very successful - to study the disintegration of a whole subcontinent. Bhyrappa reminds the reader of Shivarama Karanth by the range of experience he puts into a novel, the clarity of the issues and the vividness of characterization.

In criticism, Kirthinatha Kurthakoti has done very valuable work. Without aligning himself with the Navya School, he has used its tools like a master. His recent book on Bendre's poetry *Bhringada Benneri* is a perceptive study based on a study of the imagery of the poet. V.M. Inamdar, S. Ananthanarayana and L.S. Seshagiri Rao have contributed valuable studies of Western Literature and criticism. S.V. Ranganna's monumental work, *Paschatya Gambhira Natakagalu*, is a critical account of the history of tragedy in the West. G. S. Shivarudrappa has written a scholarly and critical study of aesthetics - *Soundarya Sameekshe* - and a comprehensive study of the Epic.

He has also proved to be a balanced and sensitive critic of contemporary literature and literary movements.

The Navyas made prose more flexible and lively; they gave it precision and enriched its vocabulary. This they did in their fiction and critical and casual writing. But in the twenty-five years following Independence the essay and travelogue flourished outside the Navya fold. Writers like A. N. Moorthy Rao, Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar and Krishananda Kamath have both widened our horizons and written good prose. Moorthy Rao's writing is especially sensitive, pellucid and bright.

A remarkable phenomenon during the last ten or fifteen years is that of Navya writers either explicitly or implicitly rejecting the Navya approach. In the Preface to his collection of short stories, *Abachurina Post Offisu* (1974) Tejaswi sounded the note of revolt, and explicitly repudiated Navya on several grounds. 'Only a political, economic and ideological change which is total can lead to really new literature' he declared. It is true, as some critics have pointed out, that the stories here retained some features of Navya writing. But the spirit is certainly different. What we have here is not an ironic contemplation of life but writing seemingly quiet, only because the emotion is superbly controlled, but all the time enraged at the injustice and exploitation in contemporary society. Only a few who outgrew the Navya stage need be mentioned to show how wide the phenomenon ranged. Chandrashekhara Kambara, with his gift of song, could no

have been at home in the Navya School. He has made a mark as a poet, a novelist and a dramatist. His *Jokumaraswamy* won the prestigious Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya Award. Dr. Shivarama Karanth has said, in an article, that the play has devalued a folktale. The play itself represents the petty tyranny of a village zamin-dar. He comes to symbolize sterility. What is remarkable is the liveliness, song and gaiety in the play. It vibrates with zest for life. In his novels Kambar is concerned with the forces of creation and the forces opposed to it. Rejecting the psychological realism of the Navyas, Kambar creates a fairy tale-like atmosphere and is more interested in the conflict than in the individual characters. Yashwant Chittal's conscious but fascinating craftsmanship has already been referred to. His short stories have now acquired new dimensions. His theme now is the relationship between the world within and the world without. A story usually begins in the world without. Two individuals meet. And imperceptibly the story moves to the world within. Even as the loneliness of the spirit becomes simanifest we also become aware of the impossibility of remaining an island, of the imperative need to form links. And into this narrative Chittal weaves also social concerns. His novel *Shikari* (1979) moves beyond Kafka in the last stages. We have here the same stifling atmosphere, the same seemingly changing but unchanging situation as in Kafka. But, while a Kafka hero has no existence in time and space, Chittal's 'hero' has such an existence. And finally he does cope with the

oppressive situation, does master it; he shakes off the feeling of helplessness and moves towards the future purposefully. Tejaswi has already been mentioned. His novel *Karvalo* (1979) is something altogether new in its theme and the world it creates. It is ostensibly the story for the search of a creature of a species which was born millions of years ago and which is fast vanishing. It brings together a creature of the dim past and man (the highest evolved creature) and so constantly the history of life over millions of years envelops the narration. And within the group engaged in the quest at one end is the scientist *Karvalo* to whom it means everything, and at the other a rustic who cannot even glimpse the nature of the task. Into the frame of this quest which telescopes the hazy past and the immediate present is fitted a picture of contemporary life, with its own crisscrossing quests of many types, and ethical judgements are called for and made. P. Lankesh has already been mentioned. He wrote *Teregalu* which belongs to the Theatre of Cruelty, and then went on to write *Sankranthi*. The urge for social revolution and the hard realities of everyday world confront each other as Basaveshwara and King Bijjala clash. His novel *Mussanjeya Kaiha Prasanga*, is strikingly devoid of the wrathful protest, the confident contempt and the revolutionary fervour we associate with a Lankesh composition; instead, it employs the device of relaxed chronicling with authorial intervention; but the novel, presumably the tale of one village, becomes the story of every Indian village, and presents a spectacle of sex, ego and money dominating its life.

The Last Decade

The last decade has been fairly eventful. The most important development was the emergence of Bandaya (Protest) and Dalita (the Oppressed) Schools. In a sense the Pragathisheelas were creators of Protest Literature. In fact, Bandaya writing is reminiscent of Pragathisheela in many ways. But there are important differences.

A distinction is sought to be made between the Bandaya writers and the Dalita Writers. A Dalita is one who by birth belongs to an oppressed class and has experienced the anguish of exploitation. A Bandaya writer sympathizes with the plight of the exploited but has not tasted the humiliation himself. Thus Siddalingaiah and Devanuru Mahadeva are Dalitas. Chandrashekhara Pati is a Bandaya writer.

It is interesting to note that several Navya writers like Lankesh and Chandrashekhara Patil led the Bandaya School. This reflects the inadequacy of Navya. Baragur Ramachandrappa, Kalegowda Nagawara, Chennana Valikara, Indhudhara Honnapura, Besagarahalli Ramanna, Boluvaru Mohamed Kunnyi, Ramzaan Darga and a host of others have written Bandaya literature. Devanuru Mahadeva's first collection of stories, *Dyavanur*, appeared in 1973. Siddalingaiah's first collection of poems, *Hole Madigara Hadu* was published in 1975.

Both Bandaya and Dalita writers are angry young men and women. They are inspired by just anger and the desire to transform society. They trace many of the ills of the contemporary society to the caste system; they also see history as the story of class struggle. They are committed writers. They refuse to believe that politics can be divorced from literature. Indeed, they write in order to strengthen the progressive forces in the cultural sphere but their object is the total transformation of society. Baragur quotes with approval Max Adereth's statements, 'The greatest originality of the modern conception of commitment is that it claims to be inseparable from literature itself' and 'Creative freedom for the writer is inseparable from a sense of social responsibility.' Bandaya claims to speak for all who are oppressed and exploited—including women who have often been victims of exploitation.

It is not as if these writers have naive notions about creative writing. They—or, at least, some important members—are quite aware that righteous indignation or revolutionary fervour alone cannot make a composition literature. It is quite true that there is a good deal of excited denunciation or superficial analysis in some productions of these schools. But no age or school of literature can claim to have been blissfully free from superficiality or sentimentality. It is also true that the expression has at times been rude and that experience has remained raw. But these writers have been gradually overcoming these flaws. Baragur Ramachandrappa himself has said, "We raise

fundamental questions; we assert that the new literature demands new yardsticks. But this does not mean that Bandaya writers do not care for art in literature. We are aware that what we say must be literature."

Even judged as literature Bandaya and Dalita writing has done quite well in the few years of its history. The power of writers like Siddalingaiah cannot be gainsaid. 1981 saw the publication of an anthology of Protest Poems and another of Protest Stories. Both contain compositions which rank high even when judged by stringent standards of criticism. Devanuru Mahadeva has become one of our important writers of short stories. There is no wrath, no excitement; all the time we seem to have nothing more than plain matter-of-fact narration. But the story brings home the suffering of the helpless and the exploited. A story like *Amasa* which narrates the seemingly unimportant happenings in the life of two persons in a few hours can hint at anguish and poverty haunting generation after generation.

It is no small development that a section of society which had been dumb ever since history began in this sub-continent has become articulate. What Bandaya and Dalita now need is the emergence of a major writer gifted with dynamism—a writer who can endow his writing with tremendous energy, emotional as well as intellectual.

It is now time to turn to younger writers. Poet, novelist and writer of short stories H. S. Venkateshamurthy has

returned to narration and lyricism. He has also returned to the shatpadi and other metres of the earlier days. He employs mythological material to suggest the yearning for the impossible, the desire to take the earth and the sky in one embrace. Again and again his poetry powerfully reminds us of the forces of death and destruction waiting to pounce on life. Sex acquires a new significance as the renewer of life. Sumathindra Nadig and M.S.K. Prabhu have been employing symbolism in their stories. S. Diwakar's collection of stories, *Ithihasa*, gives promise of first rate talent. A story like *Kraurya* brings an experience of all-pervading cruelty which makes one shudder. It has a marvellous opening presenting the spectacle of learned cruelty - the unconscious cruelty of the dry seeker of knowledge wrapped up in abstract contemplation of greatness. Exposed to all kinds of cruelty is a girl's sensitive soul hungering for affection and for man's love, a soul inhabiting a deformed, crippled body.

A development of recent years in the sphere of drama calls for comment. The Street Theatre has gained in popularity. The elite theatre, more or less confined to Bangalore and occasionally venturing beyond, has not made the impact that a visual medium like drama should in an country where illiteracy is rampant. The Street Theatre is still unsophisticated, and rather simplistic in its approach. But it has certainly taken modern drama to the common folk.

The last decade has also seen the emergence of young critics who have mastered the tools of analysis and comparison so vastly improved by the Navyas but who feel no need to hold a brief for any particular school and who place a text in supra-literary context. As representatives of this group I may mention G. H. Nayak, H. S. Raghavendra Rao, K. V. Narayan, T. P. Ashoka and Naranalli Balasubramaya. These are only a few out of a gratifyingly large number.

Before we conclude our study of modern Kannada Literature a few words must be said about the role of periodicals. In the early years periodicals like 'Sri Krishna Sukthi', 'Prabhudda Karnataka' and 'Jayakarnataka' played an important part. They not only published the writings of young writers but even sought young talent and drew it to public gaze. They made possible the exposition of the new approach, for the pioneers had also to create the taste by which they were to be appreciated. They provided the forum for the assessment of the latest publications. When Gopalakrishna Adiga gave a new turn to Kannada Literature he founded a periodical, 'Sakshi', for the exposition of the critical tenets and the literary philosophy of the Navya school. Another periodical, 'Shudra', has been voicing the views of Bandaya writers for some time. In more recent years periodicals like 'Sankramana', 'Ankana' and 'Rujuvathu' have made serious discussion of books and topics possible; they have also provided opportunities for interdisciplinary studies. It is a happy augury that

advanced and sophisticated exchange of views has become possible in Kannada.

Conclusion

India, and, as part of it, Karnataka have changed more radically in the last sixty years than in the last sixteen hundred years. Broadly speaking, therefore, Kannada Literature falls into two parts – literature upto the end of the nineteenth century, and Modern Kannada Literature. For all the experimentation and succession of movements, literary and others, the basic assumption underlying the literature upto the end of the last century is that 'the good life,' both for the individual and for society, is attainable through the tireless pursuit of abiding values already discovered and enshrined in religion and the epics. Modern man has taken on himself the responsibility of identifying his own ethical values and defining his destiny. We seldom pause to think of the magnitude of the challenge. Literature is one of the means available to modern man to probe life, to experience in his very flesh and bone the complexity of life, to stand at a distance from it and gain perspective, and to come to terms with it. Every new movement, every new writer, has to be aware of this responsibility, and to be judged in its light.

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